A STUDY OF POLYTHEISM AND IDOLATRY IN THE QURAN

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The Ahl al-Bayt (a) World Assembly

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

A Study of Polytheism and Idolatry in the Qur'an

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:Published in print

Affairs Department Ahl – al – Bayt (a) World Assembly

:Digital Publisher

Ghaemiyeh center of computerized researches

Contents

A Study of Polytheism and Idolatry in the Qur'an

ID book

Author(s): Sayyid Karimi Huseiny, Abbas

Translator(s): Lembani, Kelvin

Publisher(s): Qom : The ahl al- bayt (a) world assembly, cultural affairs department (ABWA) , ۲۰۱۰= ۱۳۸۹.

ISBN: ۹۷۸-۹۶۴-۵۲۹-۶۶۱-۰

Appearance:

Congress Classification: BP۱۰۴ / ۴س۹۲۰۴۹۵۲۱۳۸۹

Dewey decimal classification: ۲۹۷/۱۵۹

National bibliography number: ۳۶۸۳۸۸۵

سرشناسه : سیدکریمی حسینی، عباس، ۱۳۳۸ -

Sayyid Karimi Huseiny, Abbas

عنوان قراردادی : پژوهشی پیرامون شرک و بت پرستی در قرآن با تقریظ آیت الله معرفت .انگلیسی

عنوان و نام پدیدآور : A study of polytheism and Idolatry in the Qur'an/ by Sayyid Abbas Sayyid Karimi (Husayni); Muhammad Abd al- Aziz (translated Kelvin Lembani).

مشخصات نشر : Qom: The ahl al- bayt (a) world assembly, cultural affairs department (ABWA), ۲۰۱۰= ۱۳۸۹.

مشخصات ظاهری : ۱۳۶ ص.

شابک : ۹۷۸-۹۶۴-۵۲۹-۶۶۱-۰

یادداشت : انگلیسی.

یادداشت : کتابنامه به صورت زیرنویس.

آوانویسی عنوان : ای استادی آو...

موضوع : شرک -- جنبه های قرآنی

موضوع : بت پرستی -- جنبه های قرآنی

شناسه افزوده : لمبانی، کلوین، مترجم

شناسه افزوده : Lembani, Kelvin

رده بندی کنگره : BP۱۰۴ /ش۴ س۹۲۰۴۹۵۲ ۱۳۸۹

رده بندی دیویی : ۲۹۷/۱۵۹

شماره کتابشناسی ملی : ۳۶۸۳۸۸۵

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [Ahl al-Bayt] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has given many scholars to the Muslim ummah who, following in the footsteps of Imāms of the Prophet’s Household (‘a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents

hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the

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Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of .every age

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and .wholesome human nature

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shī'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime .school of thought through divine blessing

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shī'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire .world

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the .readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating .(the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (s

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imām al-Mahdī, His

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.(vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent

We express our gratitude to Sayyid ‘Abbās Sayyid Karīmī (Husaynī), the author of the present book, and Mr. Kelvin Lembani (Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz), its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the .staff of the Translation Office

Cultural Affairs Department

The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

Chapter ۱: Polytheistic Beliefs with respect to Allah

point

:Polytheistic beliefs can be discussed and studied around three pivots

.Polytheistic / idolatrous beliefs associated with Allah .۱

.Polytheistic / idolatrous beliefs associated with idols .۲

.Polytheistic / idolatrous beliefs concerning the Resurrection .۳

Allah, the only Creator and Governor of the existing cosmos

point

Polytheists believed that only Allah was the Creator and Governor of the existing universe. They acknowledged that it was Allah who had created the world and was in charge of governing the sky and the earth, and whatever was between them. This conviction can be construed as a positive and laudable belief because it is compatible .with monotheistic belief, and acceptable to monotheists

:A number of verses affirm this matter

First verse

point

Say, ‘Who provides for you out of the sky and the earth? Who controls [your] hearing“

and sight, and who brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and who directs the command?' They will say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Will you not then be wary [of Him]?' That, then, is Allah, your true Lord. So what is there after the truth except error? Then where are you being led away?"(١)

Command [amr] is an infinitive and it has [been preceded by] the definite article the [al],

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١- Sūrat Yūnus ١٠:٣١-٣٢. (All Qur'anic verses are quoted from the translation of 'Alī Qulī Qarā'ī.)

which signifies generality; therefore, the command [al-amr] means all actions. Verse ٣١ demonstrates the polytheists' doctrinal deviations with regard to Allah's management of affairs. After that, it admonishes them for not having faith, for not seeking Allah and for being led astray.

"That, then, is Allah, your true Lord", clarifies that the true Lord is Allah and that there is no [other] governor but Allah; belief in an influence besides Allah is nothing more than a fallacy and besides Him all else is falsehood and misguidance. In the forthcoming discussions, we will explain how the Qur'an maintains this belief. Some people fallaciously imagine that there is a facilitator other than Allah. Idols are effective [only] in the dream-world of idol worshippers, not in the real world. It is for this reason that the Qur'an states,

"So what is there after the truth except error? Then where are you being led away?"

The sentence "They will say, 'Allah'." is found in many [other] verses of the Qur'an. It means that the polytheists will acknowledge that the one who performs the aforementioned actions is Allah.

The following questions arise: does the verse mean that in the near future the Noble Prophet (s) would ask the polytheists these questions and they would give these

answers? Would they respond like this assuming that he would ask them these questions? Will their primordial nature dictate this in such a way that if they refer and move according to their natural disposition, they will concede that the executor of these

?affairs is Allah

.'The answer to all three questions is a simple 'yes

One delicate point in the verse, "They will say, 'Allah'." is that the response to the aforementioned questions is so clear and lucid that the polytheists do not need to think about it. They unhesitatingly and instantly say 'Allah'. This emphatically affirms .that belief in the lordship of Allah is innate and natural

If the dirt covering the primordial nature of every man is dusted off, he will conceive this truth. Perhaps, the reason why Prophet Abraham ('a) broke the idols [into pieces] was to remove this filth from the surface of the polytheists' primordial nature. It was for this same reason that [after breaking the idols into pieces] he hung an axe around the neck of the biggest idol. [When the polytheists asked him if he had broken their idols into pieces], he stated, "Rather it was the biggest of them who did it. Ask them, if they can speak."(۱) By this deed, he intended to awaken them from heedlessness, oblivion and slumber, and revert to their natural disposition. For a short while, a few of them got awakened, but when the atmosphere once again got poisoned, they (shouted, "Burn him, and help your gods."(۲

Vigilance of primordial natures

Sleeping primordial natures [oblivious to truth] sometimes wake up as a result of :certain occurrences and revert to themselves

When they board the ship, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when" (he delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him]."(۳

It can

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.Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۵۷-۶۸ -۱

.Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۵۷-۶۸ -۲

.Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt ۲۹:۶۵ -۳

easily be deduced from this verse that primordial natures awaken when they feel danger and ask for redemption from Allah, the true Redeemer and real Owner of the cosmos. But after being delivered from danger and getting entangled in common .habits and practices, primordial natures once again fall asleep

Perfect monotheism is [only achieved] when conditions are normal and when one believes that it is only Allah who is effective in hardships and ease, affliction and prosperity, indigence and affluence, good health and illness. Here, it is befitting to state that perhaps the wisdom of afflictions and misfortunes is to awaken man’s sleeping primordial nature and make it pay heed to Allah. Natural dispositions know Allah better after they get afflicted and conceive that none besides Allah can do anything, but this opportunity does not arise when conditions are normal and .ordinary. A detailed discourse about primordial natures will come later

Second verse

Say, ‘To whom does the earth belong and whoever it contains, if you know?’ They will“ say, ‘To Allah.’ Say, ‘Will you not then take admonition?’ Say, ‘Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne?’ They will say, ‘[They belong] to Allah.’ Say, ‘In whose hand is the dominion of all things, and who shelters, and no shelter can be provided without Him, if you know?’ They will say, ‘[All belong] to Allah.’ (Say, ‘Then how are you being deluded?(۱)’”(۲

Whoever’ in verse ۸۴ means rational or intelligent beings. It thus asks who the‘

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.'Or 'How are you being misled', or 'How are you being rendered blind -۱
.Sūrat al-Mu'minūn ۲۳:۸۴-۸۹ -۲

(Creator and Possessor of the earth is and who its rational existents are?(۱

The dominion [malakūt] just like the kingdom [jabarūt] is a magnified form. Its root is mulk; [it undergoes mutation] and signifies magnification once 'ūt' has been added. Malakūt means total and absolute ownership. The [above quoted] verse means that absolute possession and power over all things is in the hands of Allah. He it is who .gives shelter, and the polytheists certainly acknowledge this kind of ownership

Third verse

If you ask, 'Who created the heavens and the earth, and disposed the sun and the" moon?' The will surely say, 'Allah.' Then where do they stray? Allah expands the provision for whomever He wishes of His servants, and tightens it for him. Indeed Allah has knowledge of all things. And if you ask them, 'Who sends down water from the sky, with which He revives the earth after its death?' They will surely say, 'Allah.' (Say, 'All praise belongs to Allah.' But most of them do not apply reason."(۲

Verse ۶۱ asks polytheists why they are heading towards idols in spite of conceding that the Creator of everything: the skies, the earth, the moon and the sun is Allah, and despite acknowledging that all affairs are in His hands. Actually, they believe that idols .too, are Allah's creatures because they are also part of the sky and the earth

Thus, they worship celestial or earthly bodies. Idols are mere created things and are not independently effective because whatever they have, they have

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.Majma' al-Bayān, footnote of this same verse -۱
.Sūrat al-'Ankabūt ۲۹:۶۱-۶۳ -۲

got from the Supreme Lord. How then do they conceive the created as the creator, right as wrong and wrong as right? This is not reasonable, as explicitly stated, "But

”.most of them do not apply reason

Then where do they stray?” What is right is that they should worship Allah, having“ acknowledged that all power over all affairs is in His hands, but they have turned the truth upside down and have gone after idols instead of worshiping Allah. Why have they distanced themselves from the truth, forsaken it and gone after falsehood? How can one simultaneously hold these two contradictory beliefs? On the one hand, believe that the creator of the skies and the earth and all existents is Allah, and, on the other hand, hold that a creature besides Allah is a malefactor and benefactor; to believe that the existence of all things, even idols, depends on Allah and, on the other hand, to conceive idols as being independently effective. No reasonable man can hold .these conflicting beliefs

Of course, another belief is that Allah is the one who affects us independently and that idols are dependent on Allah in their being effective; that is to say, Allah has delegated .or handed over this power to idols

This is similar to the belief which we hold with respect to the prophets (‘a) and the Imāms (‘a); we believe that Jesus Christ (‘a) had powers to resurrect the dead, but with the permission of Allah. If we assume that they are

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dependent on Allah, going after idols is the same as pursuing Allah, in the same way that going after prophets (‘a) and the Imāms (‘a) and asking them [to provide] one’s needs is the same as asking one’s needs from Allah. This belief has no obstacle from the perspective of affirmative existence, but it is in need of proof. Do polytheists believe that idols are independent of Allah, or maintain that they are dependent on ?Allah

It can easily be inferred from the verse quoted above that polytheistic beliefs belong to the first kind; that is to say, they believe that idols can harm and benefit man and .are independent of Allah and do not apply reason to their belief system

Fourth verse

If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They will surely say,“ 'Allah.' Say, 'All praise belongs to Allah.' Yet most of them do not know. To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Indeed Allah is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. If all the trees on the earth were pens, and the sea replenished with seven more seas [were ink], the words of Allah would not be spent. Indeed, Allah is All-mighty, All-wise. Your creation and your resurrection are not but as of a single soul. Indeed, Allah is All-hearing, All-seeing. Have you not considered that Allah makes the night pass into the day and makes the day pass into the night; and He has disposed the sun and the moon, each moving for a

?specified term, and that Allah is well aware of what you do

That is because Allah is the Reality,(۱) and whatever they invoke besides Him is nullity,(۲) and because Allah is the All-exalted, the All-great. Have you not regarded that the ships sail on the sea by Allah's blessing, that He may show you some of His signs? There are indeed signs in that for every patient and grateful [servant]. When .waves cover them like awnings, they invoke Allah, putting exclusive faith in Him

But when He delivers them to the land, [only] some of them remain unswerving. And none will impugn Our signs except an ungrateful traitor. O mankind! Be wary of your Lord and fear the day when a father shall not atone for his child, nor the child atone for its father in any way. Indeed, Allah's promise is true. So do not let the life of the world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver(۳) deceive you concerning Allah. Indeed, the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah. He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and know soul knows in what (land it will die. Indeed, Allah is All-knowing, All-aware."(۴

The message of this verse is the same as that of the previous verses; it explains that .polytheists acknowledge that the creator of the sky and the earth is Allah

It appears that “Yet most of them do not know” means the same as “But

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۱- Or ‘That is because Allah is the Truth.’

۲- Or ‘What they invoke besides Him is falsehood.’

۳- That is, Satan, or anything that diverts a human being from the path of Allah.

۴- Sūrat Luqmān ۳۱:۲۵-۳۴.

most of them do not apply reason” in the previous verses and ‘knowledge’ has been used instead of ‘reason’ and vice versa. This usage is the same as the usage in the first chapter of “Usūl al-Kāfī” where reason has been employed as a synonym of knowledge vis-à-vis ignorance. It alludes to the point that someone who does not think rationally is ignorant and a person who does not use his intellect remains engulfed in his ignorance.

‘Annamā’: ‘Mā’ is a conjunction; it means ‘which or who (for the singular, dual and plural masculine respectively)’. In this verse, it has been conjoined with the emphatic reflexive anna (verily) to produce annamā.

‘Min shajaratin’ (of the trees) elucidates the conjunction mā; it means verily, if the trees which are on the earth become pens.

‘Sab‘atu abhurin’ (seven seas) does not particularly mean ‘seven’; it apparently means plenitude, that is to say, many seas.

‘The words of Allah would not be spent’ means ‘not ending’. ‘The words’ are means known by Allah and His possibilities; that is to say, if all the trees on the earth became pens and all the seas became ink, and one wanted to use them to write the things known by Allah and His possibilities, they would not manage to do so because the words of Allah have no end. This verse is similar to the following verse:

“Say, ‘If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be spent before the words of my Lord are

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(spent, even if We brought another like it for replenishment’.”(۱

Midādan’ [here] denotes ink and everything else that is a means of writing, not the‘ .technical meaning

Even if We brought another like it for replenishment’ means the utmost help We‘ would give. And this is a clue that ‘seven more seas’ in the previous verse means plenitude, not the number seven. This point has also become clear, because the things known by Allah and His possibilities are infinite while the seas are finite and .limited

Man aspires for unlimited knowledge

Man instinctively aspires for unlimited knowledge; that is to say, no matter how much we know, we still desire to know more. Sometimes, man quits seeking knowledge because he is exhausted, but if acquisition of knowledge were free and devoid of .effort, we would all want to have it

”!Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Never“

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said, “Two greedy persons never get satiated, the seeker of knowledge (and the seeker of the world.”(۲

On the one hand, the feasibility of acquiring unlimited knowledge through ordinary means is impossible because our brains have a limited capacity. Our eyes can read but for a limited time, our ears can listen but for a limited time, and our limited lifespan .does not afford us the opportunity to learn all that there is to learn

In short, our means are limited and our desires are unlimited. How can these two be harmonized? Philosophy too has proved that the reason why man gets thirsty is because there is

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.Sūrat al-Kahf ۱۸:۱۰۹ -۱
.Nahj al-Balāghah, short saying no. ۴۶۶ -۲

water [in the external world] which he can drink. Man's inner desires have objective references and can be satiated. It is not possible for him to be thirsty and there be no water on earth. It is not possible for man to have an inner desire which does not have an objective reference to satiate it. Our existence is like a [magnetic] glass which .reflects the things existing outside. It cannot lie in imaging

Considering the three aforementioned preliminary steps, that is: our unlimited desires, our limited means, and our unattainable desires, how can we achieve our ?desires? Is there any way of achieving them

Yes, there is, and the way of attaining them is devotion to Allah. It has been :transmitted in a divinely inspired hadīth that Allah states

O my slave! Obey Me so that I may make you like Myself. When I order a thing to" become existent, it becomes existent. [When I make you like Myself], the thing you (order [to become existent] will become existent. Your will shall be like My will."(۱

The knowledge possessed by the prophets ('a) was not acquired through learning. Can all that knowledge, which encompasses information about the world and the Hereafter, the earth and the sky, animals and mankind, the seas and deserts, be ?attained by means of ordinary learning

Asbagh Nubātah says, "The Noble Prophet (s) taught me a thousand chapters of the halāl and harām as well as events of the past and future, until the Day of Resurrection, and a million

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.Bihār al-Anwār, vol. ۱۰۲, p. ۱۶۵ -۱

subsections could spring out of every chapter. He even taught me the knowledge of natural afflictions and torments as well as theorems of clear judgment and decisive

(speech."(1)

The Noble Prophet (s) placed all this knowledge at the disposal of Imām 'Alī ('a) in one moment. Can all this knowledge be attained by [formal] learning? Never! The response to our unlimited needs lies in something else. We have to be obedient and devoted to Allah in order to acquire that knowledge.

After explaining the unlimited power of Allah in the previous verses, the Holy Qur'an explains another manifestation of the power of Allah; that He makes the night pass into the day and vice versa, and that He has guided the sun and the moon.

"That is because Allah is the Reality."(2) Verses prior to this are divided into two sections; one section explains that the knowledge and possibilities of Allah are unlimited and the second section explains examples of this power, such as passing the night into the day and vice versa and guiding the sun and the moon.

In this section, it explains that the one who has the power to do all this is Allah, who is the Truth and the Reality, and is not imaginary. But every existent that is not capable of doing the aforementioned things is imaginary and all the idols are illusive gods. Therefore, idolaters are nihilists, not realists. The Real God ought to have unlimited knowledge and power; otherwise, he would not be the Real

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۱- Ibid., vol. ۲۲, p. ۴۶۱.

۲- Or 'That is because Allah is the Truth.'

God.

"And because Allah is the All-exalted, the All-great": verses ۳۱ and ۳۲ have exposed another aspect of the power of Allah. If you observe carefully, [you will see that] there is a particular order running through verses ۲۵ to ۳۲; initially, the Holy Qur'an explains Allah's infinite power and after that, it mentions instances of that unlimited power. Then, it draws the conclusion that the Real God is different from illusive gods and

.[twice explains some other instances [of Allah’s infinite power

The order of Qur’anic verses

It is necessary to explain that verses of the Holy Qur’an have two characteristics: one is that every verse independently has an absolute meaning. The other is that there is a connection between the verses. The relationship and deep connection between the .verses becomes clear with meditation

Fifth verse

Does not Allah suffice [to defend] His servant? They(١) would frighten you of others“ than Him. Yet whomever Allah leads astray, has no guide, and whomever Allah guides, there is no one who can lead him astray. Is not Allah an All-mighty (Avenger?”(٢

It has been written in the books entitled “Majma‘ al-Bayān” and “Kishāf” that polytheists used to threaten the Noble Prophet (s) with the vengeance of idols and used to say, “We fear lest our gods exterminate you and make you mad [as a ”.punishment] for your vilifying them

Of others than Him’ means the idols. Of course, former idolatrous nations had also‘ made the same threats against their Prophets (‘a); the people of Hūd (‘a) had :addressed him thus

All we say is“

That is, the idolaters, who threatened the Prophet with the vengeance of their - ١ .gods

.Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٣۶-٣٧ -٢

(that some of our gods have visited you with some evil.”(١

Polytheists used to believe that idols were independent of Allah in influencing or

affecting events and imagined that idols had the power to exterminate someone or make him mad. In order to refute this fanciful thought, Allah states, "Does not Allah suffice to defend His servant?" This means that Allah suffices to defend his servant .and idols are not in the least bit effective

Sixth verse

If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They will surely say,"
'Allah.' Say, 'Have you considered what you invoke besides Allah? Should Allah desire some distress for me, can they remove the distress visited by Him? Or should He desire some mercy for me, can they withhold His mercy?' Say, 'Allah is sufficient for (me. In Him let all the trusting put their trust'."(٢

In the Holy Qur'an, 'tad'ūn' (invoke) has the same meaning as 'ta'budūn' (worship), and in this verse too 'what you invoke besides Allah' means 'what you worship .'besides Allah

Hunna' (they) is a third person, feminine, plural, personal subjective pronoun; it' refers to the idols. Polytheists gave their idols female names, such as al-Lāt and .al-'Uzzā

It has previously been said that polytheists used to believe that idols were .independent of Allah and could freely influence events. All three verses confirm it

The sentence "Can they remove the distress visited by Him?" also refutes the .assumption that idols have the power to reward and harm anyone

Afara'aytum' (Have you considered) refers to the fact'

١- Sūrat Hūd ١١:۵۴.
٢- Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٣٨.

.that polytheists thought and believed that idols could harm and reward man

The aforementioned clues affirm that polytheists used to believe that idols were independent of Allah and it is for this reason that Allah at times states, "Does not Allah suffice [to defend] His servant?" or whether anyone besides Allah can do anything? If polytheists believed that idols could harm and reward man with the permission of Allah, the verses would have asked them for reasons and proofs for their believing .that Allah had entrusted His powers to idols

It has been written in "Tafsīr Mubīn", "On the one hand, polytheists believed that Allah was the creator of the worlds, and on the other hand, they used to worship other than Allah." This is not surprising, as man sometimes believes in two contradictory .ideologies because of his lack of knowledge

If we observe carefully, we will conceive that even the Muslims and monotheists simultaneously hold two contradictory beliefs; we profess the Unity of Allah but still harbor hidden polytheism [shirk khafī]. On the one hand, we believe that, besides Allah, no one is effective in the world and that all affairs are controlled by Him, while on the other hand, we say that if so and so had not helped us, we would have been exterminated: if there were no doctor to cure me, I would have died. We become .inattentive to the main cause and pay heed to apparent causes

And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners"

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(to Him."(١

Imām al-Sādiq ('a) interpreted this verse thus: "A person who says, if so and so had not helped me, I would have died of hunger, and if so and so had not defended me, my wife, children and I would have been killed", has ascribed partners to Allah and has believed that besides Allah, someone else provided him with sustenance. However, saying that if Allah had not been kind to me by sending so and so to help me and save (me from dying does not amount to ascribing partners to Allah."(٢

The criterion for [distinguishing] hidden polytheism and manifest polytheism will

become clear in future discussions. Also, one of the causes and roots of the ignorance .of polytheists was their blind imitation of their fathers as well as their relatives

Imām 'Alī ('a) states that Allah sent His messengers and prophets ('a) to fulfill the pledges of His creation, to exhort them to do good by preaching, to unveil the hidden virtues of wisdom and remind them of His bounties and the signs of His omnipotence; namely, the sky which is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, means of living that sustain them, deaths that make them die, ailments that turn them (old and incidents that successively befall them."(٣

Seventh verse

If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earthy?' They will surely say,“ ('The All-mighty, the All-knowing created them'."(۴

.Al-'Azīz' means the invincible All-mighty'

Eighth verse

Blessed is He to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth“

.Sūrat Yūsuf ١٢:١٠۶ -١

.Majma' al-Bayān, vol. ۵, p. ۴۶٢ -٢

.Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon [khutbah] no. ١ -٣

.Sūrat al-Zukhruf ۴٣:٩ -۴

and whatever is between them, and with Him is the knowledge of the Hour, and to Him you will be brought back. Those whom they invoke besides Him have no power of intercession, except those who are witness to the truth and who know [for whom to intercede]. If you ask them, 'Who created them?' they will surely say, 'Allah.' Then (where do they stray?"(١

If you ask them who created them?" There are differences of opinion regarding who“ the third person plural objective pronoun them refers to. It has thus been written in

[the book of Qur'anic exegesis entitled] "Majma' al-Bayān", "Both objective pronouns refer to idolaters; that is to say, if polytheists were asked who created them, they would respond that it is Allah.

In "Kanz al-Daqā'iq", it has been written, "It is probable that the objective pronoun refers to both idolaters and idols."(۲) These two probabilities have been suggested in "Tafsīr Qurtubī".(۳)

If the objective pronoun refers to idolaters, then the verse means that Allah took charge of the affairs of the idolaters when he created them. It is not reasonable for them to go after other than Him. And if the objective pronoun refers to idols, then if the idols are themselves Allah's creatures and the polytheists also admit this, then how do they worship them despite the fact that whatever they have is derived from Allah?

The objective pronoun refers to both the idols and polytheists, encompasses both the object of worship and the worshipper.

Our discussion [so far] has

p: ۱۹

۱- Sūrat al-Zukhruf ۴۳:۸۵-۸۷.
۲- Tafsīr 'Kanz al-Daqāniq', vol. ۹, p. ۳۸۰.
۳- Tafsīr Qurtubī, vol. ۱۶, p. ۱۲۳.

been about laudable polytheistic beliefs, such as; their conviction that the Creator of the existing cosmos is Allah, the Sustainer, Possessor, Creator of life and death, Governor, Lord, Ruler, and Sender of rains.

Belief that Allah has a child

Some polytheists used to believe that Allah had a child, that angels were Allah's daughters. Of course, the belief that Allah had a child is not peculiar to polytheists; the Jews and Christians also held this belief. The Jews believed that Ezra ['Uzayr] was the

son of Allah and the Christians that Jesus Christ ('a) was the son of Allah. In reality, the Jews and Christians hold polytheistic beliefs despite the fact that they are not classified as polytheists. In this regard, there are a number of verses which we will :treat hereunder

And they say, 'Allah has taken a son.' Immaculate is He! Rather to Him belongs" whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, and when He decides on a matter, He just says to it, 'Be!' (and it is."(١)

In the books of Qur'anic exegesis entitled "Kishāf" and "Majma' al-Bayān", it has been written that the personal subjective pronoun they means three groups of people; the Jews, Christians and polytheists, and the names of all the three groups have been mentioned in the preceding verses. These verses are indicative of the decadent doctrines of the polytheists and people of the Book (the Jews and Christians) and show how weak their conception and knowledge of

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.Sūrat al-Baqarah ٢:١١۶-١١٧ -١

.Allah is

They downgrade Him to the level of creatures who have children and descendants knowing that bearing children is contingent upon having a spouse. Therefore, they also have to believe that Allah has a wife. These beliefs show how the polytheists and the people of the Book are overwhelmed by their illusions and delusions, conceiving .Him as an ordinary existent who has children and descendants

,Imām 'Alī ('a) states

They are wrong who liken Thee to their idols, and dress Thee with the apparel of the" creatures of their imagination, attribute to Thee parts of body fancied by them and (consider Thee as a creature created by their [deluded] intelligence."(١)

It is necessary to say that being caught up in the trap of delusions is not peculiar to polytheists; some [of our] great scholars were also entangled in these kinds of delusions and misconceptions with respect to knowing Allah and imagined that they had attained real knowledge of Allah despite that what they had achieved was nothing more than fallacies. Narrating the following issue bears witness to this:

Āyatullāh Sha'rānī's objection to Mullā Sadrā

point

The late Āyatullāh Sha'rānī has written a footnote in "Majma' al-Bayān", printed by Islāmiyyah Publications, at the bottom of verse ٣ of Sūrat al-Hadīd:

"He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has knowledge over all things."

Āyatullāh Sha'rānī has written, "Mulla Sadrā says, 'I used to meditate a lot upon verses such as "Say, 'He is Allah, the One'," (٢) and the first verses of Sūrat al-Hadīd and felt I understood

p: ٢١

١- Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon [khutbah] no. ٩٠.

٢- Sūrat al-Ikhlās ١١٢:١.

certain mysteries. Then, I came across a tradition in which Imām al-Sajjād ('a) was asked about monotheism. He responded, 'Allah, the High, knew that towards the end of time meditative people will come. It is for this reason that he revealed Sūrat al-Ikhlās and the first verses of Sūrat al-Hadīd. Whoever seeks to know more about Allah than what has been revealed will perish.' After coming across this tradition, I became very glad and thanked Allah for granting me the blessing of guidance'." (١)

After recounting this, the late Sha'rānī has said, "We have no doubt that Mullā Sadrā is a man of great academic knowledge, but this tradition and the likes of it admonish people who engage in contemplation about the true nature of something and imagine

that they have gotten its essence although they have not. This tradition intends to stall this type of thinking and state that one should be contented with just knowing that He is One, He neither begat nor was begotten, and that He is the First and the ”.Last. Anything exceeding this should not be uttered

Second verse

They make the jinn partners of Allah, though He has created them, and carve out“ sons and daughters for Him, without any knowledge. Immaculate is He and exalted above what they allege [concerning Him]! The Originator of the heavens and the earth; how could He have a son when He has had no spouse? He created all things (and He has knowledge of all things.”(۲

Khalaqahum’ (He has created them): In‘

p: ۲۲

.Al-Kāfi, vol. ۱, p. ۹۱, section [bāb] nisbah -۱
.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۱۰۰-۱۰۱ -۲

the book of Qur’anic exegesis entitled] “Majma‘ al-Bayān”, three possibilities have] :been given as to who the pronoun ‘them’ refers to

The first possibility is the idolaters; the second possibility is that the pronoun them refers to the jinn; that is to say, polytheists made the jinn partners of Allah despite the .fact that the jinn were created by Allah

How can they worship the jinn and make them partners of Allah when they were ?created by Allah? Can the created be made a partner of the Creator

The third possibility is that the pronoun refers to both the polytheists and the jinn; that is to say, Allah created both people and the jinn, and both the worshippers and .the worshipped. This possibility is better than the other two possibilities

Al-jinn’ (the jinn): What is meant by ‘the jinn’? Two possibilities have been given in‘

:"“Majma‘ al-Bayān

The first possibility is that the jinn are angels because jinn means invisible as well as hidden and the angels too are concealed from the eyes.

The second possibility is the well-known jinn. The following verse can help confirm this possibility:

“Indeed some persons from the humans would seek the protection of some persons from the jinn, thus only adding to their rebellion.”(١)

In interpretation of this verse, it has been said that whenever an Arab intended to travel through the desert at night [during the Age of Ignorance], he would say, “I seek refuge in the beloved of this desert from the ignorant and unwise of his people.” They used

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١- Sūrat al-Jinn ٧٢:۶.

to say this because they believed that the jinn used to protect them.

The inferior level of the culture and knowledge of idolaters can be deduced from this verse. It can also be understood from this verse that the Jews and Christians are polytheists too, because the beginning of this verse says that polytheists had made the jinn partners of Allah and continues that they had carved out sons and daughters for Him.

The ones who carved out sons for Him are Jews and Christians and the ones who carved out daughters for Him are polytheists. And the outward meaning of “They make the jinn partners of Allah” is that polytheists are of two kinds; one kind believes that Allah has a son and the second kind believes that He has daughters.

Third verse

“They ascribe to Him offspring(١) from among His servants! Man is indeed a manifest

ingrate. Did He adopt daughters from what He creates while He preferred you with sons? When one of them is brought the news of what he ascribes to the All-beneficent, his face becomes darkened(٢) and he chokes with suppressed agony, [and says], 'What! One who is brought up among ornaments and is inconspicuous in contests?' And they have made angels—who are servants of the All-beneficent—females. Were they witness to their creation? Their testimony will be written down (and they shall be questioned."(٣

"They ascribe to Him offspring(۴) from among His servants!"

This verse reveals the concealed natural disposition of polytheists. They choose daughters for Allah despite the fact

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١- Lit.: 'They ascribe to Him a portion from among His servants.'

٢- That is, when he is brought the news of the birth of a daughter.

٣- Sūrat al-Zukhruf ۴٣:١۵-١٩.

۴- Lit.: 'They ascribe to Him a portion from among His servants.'

that daughters are so displeasing to them that their faces become darkened when they are brought the news of having a daughter and prefer sons [for themselves?] If sons were superior, Allah would have chosen them for Himself. Why would He choose daughters, who are inferior in their opinion, for Himself?

The Holy Qur'an seeks to make polytheists conceive the ugliness and falseness of their polytheistic beliefs, especially verse ١٨ which indicates that women are more inclined to ornaments and beautification and that their intellectual powers are lower than those of men. To prove the weakness of their beliefs, verse ١٩ asks them if they had witnessed the creation of the angels. If not, why do you believe that they are females?

Fourth verse

"Did your Lord prefer for you sons, and [Himself] adopt females from among the

(angels? Indeed you say a monstrous word!"(1)

Fifth verse

And warn those who say, 'Allah has taken a son.' They do not have any knowledge of" that, nor did their fathers. Monstrous is the utterance that comes out of their mouths, (and they say nothing but a lie."(2)

It can be gathered from Qur'anic verses that idolaters and their fathers had no .reason and proof for their beliefs that Allah had a child

".Monstrous is the utterance that comes out of their mouths"

It is utterly unpardonable for a person to believe that the sky and the earth are creatures of Allah on the one hand and on the other hand to ascribe children to Allah, .because children are Allah's creatures

Sixth verse

They"

.Sūrat al-Isrā' (or Banī Isrā'īl) ۱۷:۴۰ -۱

.Sūrat al-Kahf ۱۸:۴-۵ -۲

say, 'The All-beneficent has taken a son!' You have certainly advanced something hideous! The heavens are about to be rent apart at it, the earth to be split open, and the mountains to collapse into bits, that they should ascribe a son to the All-beneficent. It does not behoove the All-beneficent to take a son. There is none in the (heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-beneficent as a servant."(1)

They say' refers to polytheists, because verse ۸۱ of Sūrah Maryam, which says, "They' have taken gods besides Allah that they may be a [source of] might to them", refers to .polytheists and verse ۸۸ is a continuation of that verse

"The heavens are about to be rent apart at it"

.explains the uttermost ugliness of this belief

It does not behoove the All-beneficent to take a son" explains that it is not" reasonable and rational for Allah to possess a son. How can Allah, the Possessor of all creatures and the Creator of the whole existing cosmos and the sky and the earth and ?the Creator of idolaters and the angels take a son

There is none in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-beneficent as a" :"servant

.all creatures are humble servants of Allah and none of them is equal to Him

Seventh verse

They say, 'The All-beneficent has taken off-spring.' Immaculate is He! Rather they" are [His] honored servants. They do not venture to speak ahead of Him, and they act by His command. He knows that

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.Sūrat Maryam ۱۹:۸۸-۹۳ -۱

which is before them and that which is behind them, and they do not intercede except for someone He approves of, and they are apprehensive for fear of Him. Should any of them say, 'I am a god besides Him,' We will requite him with hell. Thus, do We (requite the wrongdoers."(۱

It can be inferred from the above that the polytheists conceived Allah's honored servants and angels as His offspring. It can also be deduced that they believed that angels were independent of Allah in affecting and they could intercede without His .permission

Allah repudiates this belief by saying that angels are neither independent nor take precedence over Allah, but submit to Him, and He has complete knowledge of their

past and future deeds. It can further be gathered that angels do not have the right to intercede for anyone except those for whom Allah has given permission, and the .angels themselves fear and dread Allah's majesty

If polytheists had believed that angels were dependent on Allah and interceded with His permission, in the way that we believe with respect to the Imāms ('a) and prophets ('a), the sentence "they do not intercede except for someone He approves .of" would be unnecessary

Verse ٢٩ clearly shows that polytheists believed that angels were gods besides Allah. It is for this reason that He states, "Should any of them say, 'I am a god besides Him,' We will requite him with Hell. Thus, do We requite the wrongdoers." This sentence perfectly means that idolaters

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.Sūrat al-Anbiyā' ٢١:٢۶-٢٩ -١

.believed that their idols were independent of Allah

Eighth verse

Allah has not taken any offspring, neither is there any god besides Him, for then each" god would take away what he created, and some of them would surely rise against (the others. Clear is Allah of what they allege!"(١

It can be deduced from [this] verse that polytheists used to conceive as indisputable the belief that Allah had an offspring and partner. If Allah had a son and partner independent of Him, the multiplicity of gods would result in the diversity and incompatibility of gods and their creatures and each of them would desire to .dominate the other, which would give rise to disorder in the cosmic order

Ninth verse

Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion to His servant that he may be a warner to" all the nations. He, to whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth,

and who did not take a son, nor has He any partner in sovereignty, and He created (everything and determined it in precise measure."(٢

He, to whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth": Evidently, this" description that Allah is the Possessor of all the skies and the earth bespeaks that .belief in a son and partner for Allah is a perversion

Tenth verse

Ask them, 'Are daughters to be for your Lord while sons are to be for them? Did We" create the angels female while they were present?'(٣) Look! It is indeed out of their mendacity that they say, 'Allah has begotten,' And

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.Sūrat al-Mu'minūn ٢٣:٩١ -١

.Sūrat al-Furqān ٢٥:١-٢ -٢

.'Or 'while they were witnesses -٣

they indeed speak a falsehood. Has he preferred daughters to sons? What is the matter with you? How do you judge? Will you not then take admonition? Do you have a manifest authority?(١) Then produce your scripture, should you be truthful. And they have set up a kinship between Him and the jinn, while the jinn certainly know that they will indeed be presented [before Him]. Clear is Allah of what they allege [about (Him]—[all] except Allah's exclusive servants."(٢

These verses have clarified a lot of issues. In these verses, Allah initially orders the Noble Prophet (s) to ask polytheists how they choose sons for themselves and ascribe .daughters to Allah despite the fact that they themselves prefer sons to daughters

Then, He clarifies the absurdity of their words by asking them why they allege that angels are female when they were not witness to their creation. After that He shuns their allegation that Allah has begotten a son as sheer mendacity and baseless speech, so null and void that a rational man would not ordinarily utter such words and those who say this evidently do so as a result of inattentiveness. In continuation, He

.asks them to produce manifest proof for their beliefs if indeed they are truthful

"?What is the matter with you? How do you judge? Will you not then take admonition"

These sentences express surprise at what idolaters think with respect to Allah. The god that you depict is [merely a fruit of] your fantasies. That imaginative being is

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.That is, in support of what they assert -۱
.Sūrat al-Sāffāt ۳۷:۱۴۹-۱۶۰ -۲

not the real God. Search and look for the real God. The real God cannot have an .offspring

(What is their idea about the Lord of the worlds?"(۱"

In simple words, these are absurdities and idle talk that they forge with respect to Allah. Strange is their judgment about Allah. How can the Absolute Self-sufficient [Allah] have a son? "Do you have a manifest authority?"(۲) If you speak the truth, .produce evident proof

And they have set up a kinship between Him and the jinn, while the jinn certainly" know that they will indeed be presented [before Him]": there are two possibilities of :what the jinn means

The verse hints at Zoroastrian beliefs in Yazdān(۳) and Ahrīman(۴). They used to .۱ believe that Ahrīman was the brother of Yazdān and because the Devil belongs to the jinn, God should also belong to the jinn and these two have family ties. They used to .believe that Yazdān was the creator of good and Ahrīman was the creator of bad

The second possibility is that the jinn mean the angels because they are invisible .۲ .beings

Those who set up a kinship between Allah and the jinn did so because they used to believe that the angels were Allah's daughters and thus there existed between them

.and Allah the relationship of father and daughter

This proves that the God whom the polytheists used to imagine was not the real God. If they had known the real God, they would not have uttered such nonsensical words and would

p: ۳۰

.Sūrat al-Sāffāt ۳۷:۸۷ -۱
.That is, in support of what they assert -۲
.God: or name of the principle or originator of good -۳
.Satan: or the fiend -۴

not have adopted such delusive beliefs. These verses show how deeply rooted these incorrect beliefs were among polytheists, which necessitated an outspoken encounter with them in the hope that they may perhaps wake up from their .inattentive slumber

Eleventh verse

Have you considered Lāt and 'Uzzā and Manāt, the third one? Are you to have males" and He females? That, then, will be an unfair division! These are but names you have coined—you and your fathers—for which Allah has not sent down any authority. They follow nothing but conjectures and the desires of the [lower] soul, while there has already come to them the guidance from their Lord. Shall man have whatever he ?yearns for

Yet to Allah belong this world and the Hereafter. How many an angel there is in the heavens whose intercession is of no avail in any way except after Allah grants permission to whomever He wishes and approves of! Indeed those who do not .believe in the Hereafter give female names to the angels

They do not have any knowledge of that. They follow nothing but conjectures, and indeed conjecture is no substitute for the truth. So avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of the world. That is the ultimate

reach of their knowledge. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are [rightly] guided."(1)

Lāt, 'Uzzā and Manāt are names of the three most important idols worshipped by idolaters. According to

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1- Sūrat al-Najm 53:19-30.

the exegesis in] "Al-Mīzān", it is for this reason that out of the many idols that existed,] Allah has only named these three.

1) Manāt is also the third of those idols and is different from the [first] two.

2) The status and position of Manāt is below the rank of Lāt and 'Uzzā.(1)

"These are but names which you have coined": These partners and daughters which you ascribe to Allah are nothing but a series of delusions which you and your fathers have invented in your minds; they are nothing but names which you have coined and have no external existence. You are pursuing conjectures and carnal desires, not logic and decisive proof.

"Yet to Allah belong this world and the Hereafter":

This sentence makes it clear that idols play no role in the cosmic system. Intercession is not in the hands of idols, but in the hands of Allah and the intercession of real intercessors depends on the permission of Allah. Idolaters were wrong to imagine that idols had the power of intercession.

"Indeed those who do not believe in the Hereafter give female names to the angels": They had chosen female names for the angels because they believed that the angels were daughters of Allah in spite of not having any proof for this choice and belief, but based on mere conjecture and supposition. Belief cannot be based on sheer guesses, but on certainty.

So avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life“ of the world”: Remembrance

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.Tafsīr ‘Illīyyīn, p. ۵۲۶ -۱

dhikr] has been interpreted as monotheism [tawhīd]; that is to say, avoid every] .person who has turned away from monotheism

That is the ultimate reach of their knowledge”: This means that the utmost limit of“ their understanding and cognition is adoption of such baseless beliefs and turning away from monotheism [tawhīd]. This verse intends to say that if polytheists .possessed high discernment, they would not have blindly followed their conjectures

They would have gone after certain knowledge and certitude and would not have allowed themselves to believe in a partner and child for Allah. It ought not to be left unsaid that the majority of interpreters have construed that [dhālika] as indicating .that idolaters chose the world over the hereafter

Twelfth verse

Say, ‘He is Allah, the One. Allah is the All-embracing. He neither begat, nor was“ (begotten, nor has He any equal’.”(۱

.Al-samad’ means the All-rich, One who is Needless and All-embracing‘

.Kufuwan’ means equal, the same, equivalent and a peer‘

The recommendations to recite Sūrat al-Tawhīd in the ritual prayers bespeak that polytheistic beliefs were very firmly rooted [among people] and Allah wished to uproot these warped notions with such emphases. By means of this Sūrah, Allah would like to .cleanse their minds of these delusions

There are many more verses in the Holy Qur’an which indicate that this belief was :held by idolaters. For further research, refer to the following verses

Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ١٧:١١١, Sūrat Maryam ١٩:٣٤-٣٥, Sūrat Yūnus ١٠:٦٨, Sūrat al-An‘ām ٦:١٠١, Sūrat al-Zukhruf ٤٣:٨١, Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٤ and Sūrat al-Jinn ٧٢:٣.

Belief that Allah has a spouse

One of

١- Sūrat al-Ikhlās ١١٢:١-٤. This Sūrah—also called “Sūrat al-Tawhīd”—is a statement of Islamic monotheism which negates any kind of anthropomorphism that may compromise pure monotheism or tawhīd. It is called ‘Sūrah al-Ikhlās’, as it purges tawhīd of deviant ideas and posits it in its exclusive purity.

the despicable polytheistic beliefs was their conviction that Allah had a spouse. Even if this belief cannot be explicitly deduced from verses of the Holy Qur’an, it can still be inferred from verses in which Allah refutes taking a spouse that such a belief existed among idolaters.[[

Consider this verse:

“Exalted be the majesty of our Lord, He has taken neither a spouse nor a son. Indeed the foolish ones among us used to utter atrocious lies concerning Allah.”(١)

Aversion to Monotheism

point

One of the despicable polytheistic beliefs was their extreme aversion to the oneness of Allah (monotheism) and reciprocally, their joy at the mention of their idols. A number of verses indicate that they used to behave in an abominable and disgusting manner when they heard the name of the One God being remembered and used to evade discussions about monotheism. They were never at all willing to hear [the word] monotheism and reciprocally, they used to get very elated at the remembrance of their idols.

:We will quote Qur'anic verses in this regard

First verse

And We cast veils on their hearts, lest they should understand it, and a deafness into" their ears. When you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an, they turn their backs in (aversion."(۲

Second verse

When Allah is mentioned alone, [thereat] shrink away the hearts of those who do not" believe in the Hereafter, but when others are mentioned besides Him, behold, they (rejoice!"(۳

Third verse

(Hard on the polytheists is that to which you summon them."(۴"

Fourth verse

Has he reduced the gods to one god? This is indeed an odd"

.Sūrat al-Jinn ۷۲:۳-۴ -۱

.Sūrat al-Isrā' (or Banī Isrā'īl) ۱۷:۴۶ -۲

.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۵ -۳

.Sūrat al-Shawrā ۴۲:۱۳ -۴

thing! Their elite go about [urging others]: 'Go and stand by your gods! This is indeed the desirable thing [to do]. We did not hear of this in the latter-day creed.(۱) This is (nothing but a fabrication'."(۲

It is necessary to mention that the verses which come before and after the above quoted verses concern negation of the Noble Prophet's (s) Divine Mission [nubūwwat]. Polytheists were amazed at how one man could have been delegated the prophetic mission, and what is more, that one man was Muhammad (s), the orphan brought up

by Abū Tālib and one who had no financial status in society. They were surprised why none of their rich and powerful leaders had been appointed to prophethood and why .revelation had not been revealed to them

In "Majma' al-Bayān", it has been written that the reason of revelation of the aforementioned verses is that twenty five people among the leaders of the Quraysh, among them Mughayrah, Abū Jahl, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah, went to see His Holiness Abū Tālib. They said to him, "You are our leader. .Your nephew curses our idols

You judge between us and him." Abū Tālib called the Noble Prophet (s) and said to him, "These people have a request from you." The Noble Prophet (s) asked, "What is their request?" The leaders of the Quraysh said, "Leave us and our idols alone and we too will leave you alone." The Noble Prophet (s) responded, "Just pronounce one phrase and

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.That is, in the polytheistic creed prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia -۱

.Sūrat Sād ۳۸:۵-۷ -۲

you will become the leaders of both the Arabs and non-Arabs. That one phrase is 'There is no god but Allah [lā ilāha illā allāh]'." Upon hearing this, they got up and left the meeting, saying, "He has made all gods become One God." It was then that this .verse was revealed

:A number of points can be inferred from the above quoted verses

The first point is that belief in monotheism and renouncing idols was very surprising to polytheists; it is for this reason that the Qur'an states, "Has he reduced the gods to one god? This is indeed an odd thing!" Evidently, accepting monotheism and forsaking idols was inconceivable and unacceptable. Bear this point in mind that they used to conceive them as independent of Allah because they would not have thought it inconceivable and unacceptable to renounce idols and accept monotheism if their

.idols were dependent on Allah

The second point is that the leaders of Quraysh did not give any rational response to the Noble Prophet's (s) suggestion and only expressed surprise.

The third point is that they urged one another to stand by their gods, saying, "Go and stand by your gods!"

The fourth point is that in the book of exegesis called "Kishāf", the verse "This is indeed the desirable thing [to do]" has been interpreted as idolatry and its defense being Allah's wish, as He has endorsed it. Therefore, He will help them bear the hardships of defending idolatry and defeat Muhammad.

If the verse means the same as

has been written in "Kishāf", then it ought to be said that idolaters not only believed that idolatry was pleasing to Allah, but that He ordered and encouraged mankind to worship idols. It is possible to confirm and infer the existence of such beliefs among idolaters from verses which say that they have no manifest reason and proof from Allah [to practice idolatry]. But the verse probably means that the aim and goal of polytheists is [to practice] idolatry. Idols are their gods and respected by them; therefore, they ought to stand by them and defend them, as well as bear the hardships that befall them on this course.

The fifth point is that idolaters said, "We did not hear of this in the latter-day creed.(۱) This is nothing but a fabrication." This shows their stubborn belief in idolatry. They used to perceive anything contradictory to their beliefs as false.

Chapter ۲: Polytheistic Beliefs with respect to Idols

point

A very important discussion that needs to be treated is whether idolaters believed that their idols were longitudinal to God, that is, dependent on God or whether they

conceived them as latitudinal to God, that is to say, they were rivals of God. In order to explain this issue, it ought to be said that two kinds of polytheistic beliefs are :conceivable

The first kind is that idolaters believed that the One God ruled over the whole cosmos and there was no other god save the One God, and idols were only intermediaries of grace and holy creatures through whom

p: ٣٧

.That is, in the polytheistic creed prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia -١

.Allah delivered His graces to other creatures

The second kind is that idolaters believed that idols were latitudinal to Allah and were equal to Him, and that their dominion and power was independent of Allah. They conceived that idols had the power to harm and reward, and they possessed lordship and governorship over the cosmos, equal to the power and governorship of Allah. In other words, Allah was one of the many gods; for instance, the first god was Allah, the .second one was Hubal, the third one was Lāt, the fourth one was 'Uzzā, etc

Of course, it is clear that a true monotheist would never hold such beliefs. A true monotheist believes that Allah is essentially One; none is the creator and governor of .the world save Allah, who is infinite and rules over the whole cosmos

After positive clarification of the discussion that two kinds of polytheistic beliefs are conceivable, we have to examine which one of the two conceivable beliefs is ?supported by proof, the belief that idols are latitudinal or longitudinal to Allah

Equating idols with Allah

Our assertion is that rational proofs and Qur'anic verses bespeak that idolaters used to conceive idols as being latitudinal to Allah. We will present a number of proofs in :this regard

The first proof: polytheists' avowal of equality on the Day of Resurrection

:First verse

And they shall be told: 'Where is that which you used to worship besides Allah? Do" they help you, or do they help each other?' Then they will be cast into it on their faces .—they and the perverse, and the hosts of Iblīs, all together

They will say, as they wrangle in it [together], 'By Allah, we had indeed been in manifest error, when we equated you with the Lord of all worlds! And no one led us astray except the guilty. Now we have no intercessors, nor do we have any (sympathetic friend'."(١

.They' refers to idols and 'the perverse' means idolaters'

The assertion that idols are equal with Allah is only correct once they believe that idols independently have the power to rule and govern in the same way that Allah independently rules and governs the cosmos. It does not make any difference whether this equality exists in all affairs or only in some issues. In whatever aspect this equality may be conceived, it leads to the belief that idols are Allah's rivals and equals in that facet; for instance, they used to believe that idols could harm and .reward man

And no one led us astray except the guilty" has two meanings; the first means past" .generations whom they followed or imitated, and the second means the devils

Now we have no intercessors": "Intercessors' in this verse mean supporters who" .could plead on their behalf

Nor do we have any sympathetic friend": "Sympathetic friend' in this verse means" friends with whom they have family ties and relations, especially those who love them .and whom they love

The conclusion of these verses is that on the Day of Resurrection, idolaters will say

that they lived in sheer delusion and fantasy; imagined that idols were equal with Allah, and now

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.Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’ ۲۶:۹۲-۱۰۱ -۱

they can help neither themselves nor them. Finally, the reason why idols will be burnt in Hell is to show polytheists that idols could not even defend themselves.

:Second verse

(Yet the faithless equate [others] with their Lord."(۱)..."

They equated idols with Allah. This verse is similar to the verse "What! Is there a god besides Allah?"(۲) and the verse

And do not follow the desires of those who deny Our signs, and those who do not" (believe in the Hereafter, and equate [others] with their Lord."(۳

The conclusion is that 'equating' means 'being exactly the same as', and it can be inferred that polytheists believed that idols were latitudinal to Allah.

:In regard to polytheistic beliefs that idols are equal to Allah, "Nahj al-Balāghah" states

They are wrong who equate Thee to their idols, and dress Thee with the apparel of" the creatures of their imagination, attribute to Thee parts of body of their own thinking and consider Thee after the creatures of various types, through the working of their intelligence. I stand witness that whoever equated Thee with anything out of Thy creation took a match for Thee, and whoever takes a match for Thee is an unbeliever, according to what is stated in

Thy unambiguous verses and indicated by the evidence of Thy clear arguments. (I stand witness that) Thou art that Allah who cannot be confined in the fetters of intelligence so as to admit change of condition by entering its imagination nor in the shackles of mind so as to become limited

۱- Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱.
۲- Sūrat al-Naml ۲۷:۶۰.
۳- Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۵۰.

(and an object of alterations."(۱)

The word 'equate' clearly indicates that polytheists believed that Allah and idols were in the same category and latitudinal with each other. Taking the aforementioned issues into consideration, all the Qur'anic verses which have the word 'nidd' (like, the same as, image) and 'indād' (rivals) demonstrate polytheistic beliefs that conceived idols as being equal with Allah.

Third verse:

"He who made the earth a place of repose for you, and the sky a canopy, and He sends down water from the sky, and with it He brings forth crops for your sustenance. So do not set up equals to Allah, while you know."

This verse explains and refutes the beliefs of idolaters, and states that polytheists believed that Allah had an equal and partner, that idols were latitudinal and equal with Allah.

The second proof: applying the word 'god' to idols

point

The second reason for asserting that polytheists held that idols were latitudinal to Allah is that Qur'anic verses [state that idolaters used to] apply the word 'ilāh' (god) to idols. Ascribing the word god to idols indicates that this word was employed in the same sense that it is used with respect to Allah, and it shows that they believed in the multiplicity of gods, the first of whom is Allah and the rest are idols. Consider the following verses:

First verse:

"Your god [ilāh] is the One God [ilāhun wāhidun]; there is no god except Him, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful."(2)

In this verse, all gods have been confined in the One God and Allah has been described as the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.

1- Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon [khutbah] no. ۹۰.
2- Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۶۳.

Evidently, this verse explains that idolaters imagined that the world had a number of gods. Therefore, this verse bespeaks that polytheists used to call their gods 'ilāh' (god) in the same sense it is applied to Allah. It is for this reason that the existence of other gods is repudiated.

Second verse:

"This is indeed the true account, for sure. There is no god but Allah, and indeed Allah is the All-mighty, the All-wise."(1)

Verses which precede and follow the above quoted one concern Christian claims that Jesus Christ ('a) is the son of God and that it is not possible for a child to have no father. Therefore, Jesus' father is God and the son of God also has to be a god. The Holy Qur'an thus refutes their claims:

"These that We recite to you are from the signs and the Wise Reminder: indeed the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam: He created Him from dust, then said to him, 'Be,' and he was. This is the truth from your Lord, so do be among the skeptics. Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah's curse upon the liars.' This is indeed the true account, for sure. There is no god but Allah, and indeed Allah is the All-mighty, All-wise. But if

.Sūrat Āl ʻImrān ۳:۶۲ -۱

they turn away, indeed Allah best knows the agents of corruption. Say, 'O people of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah,' But if they turn away, Say, 'Be witness that we are (Muslims'."(۱)

The Holy Qur'an declares that Jesus Christ ('a) came into being on Allah's orders without a father in the same way that Adam ('a) was created from clay without a father and mother. Then the Noble Prophet (s) was ordered to invite Christians to a mutual invocation of cursing the liars. The Christians feared to take part in it and instead agreed to pay jizyah(۲). In this verse Allah states that the story of Jesus Christ .('a) is as He has stated; there is no god save Allah

:Third verse

O People of the Book! Do not exceed the bounds in your religion, and do not attribute" anything to Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only an apostle of Allah, and His word that He cast toward Mary and a spirit from Him. So have faith in Allah and His apostles, and do not say, '[God is] is a trinity.' Relinquish [such a creed]! That is better for you. Allah is but the One God. He is far too immaculate to have any son. To Him belongs whatever is in the

.Sūrat Āl ʻImrān ۳:۵۸-۶۴ -۱

Head tax imposed on all non-Muslims living under the protection of an Islamic -۲ .government

heavens and whatever is on the earth, and Allah suffices as a trustee. The Messiah would never disdain being a servant of Allah, nor would the angels brought near [to

Him], and whoever disdains His worship and is arrogant, He will gather them all (toward Him."(1)

The Messiah would never disdain being a servant of Allah": It has been recounted" that a number of Christians from Najrān went to meet the Noble Prophet (s) and said, "Why do you ascribe fault to our master?" The Noble Prophet (s) asked, "Who is your master?" They responded, "Jesus Christ." The Noble Prophet (s) asked, "What have I said against him that would be construed as ascribing fault to him?" The Christians said, "You have said that he is a servant and messenger of Allah." It was at this that (the above quoted verse was revealed.(2)

Christians believe in three gods; god the father, god the son and god the Holy Spirit. Allah has repudiated this belief, stating that there is only One God and that is Allah. Jesus Christ ('a) himself, whom you the Christians call god and the son of Allah, and the angels whom idolaters consider as daughters of Allah and to whom they apply the .word, all admit that they are servants of Allah

Since the Qur'an states that Jesus Christ ('a) and the angels do not deny being servants of Allah, it is enough to clearly prove that Christians and idolaters believed that Jesus ('a) and the angels are not servants

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.Sūrat al-Nisā' ۴:۱۷۱-۱۷۲ -۱

.Tafsīr 'Illīyyīn, p. ۱۰۵, footnote of this very verse -۲

.of Allah but are independent and latitudinal, not longitudinal, to Allah

Their being longitudinal to Allah is compatible with servitude and there was no need for Allah to state that Jesus Christ ('a) and the angels themselves admit being His servants. The Holy Qur'an's assertion only holds true in the case that Christians and .idolaters believed in the independence of their objects of worship vis-à-vis Allah

And His word that He cast toward Mary": This means Jesus Christ ('a), who came into"

’.being when Allah said, ‘Be

And a spirit from Him”: A number of statements have been made with respect to the“ :meaning of this verse

Jesus Christ (‘a), just like the spirit, is a means of granting life because he guides .١ .[[mankind

.He is a mercy from Allah .٢

Hints at verse ٩١ of Sūrat al-Anbiyā’, which says, “And her who guarded her chastity, .٣ so We breathed into her Our Spirit, and made her and her son a sign for all the ”.nations

:Fourth verse

They are certainly faithless who say, ‘Allah is the third [person] of a trinity,’ while“ there is no god except the One God. If they do not relinquish what they say, there (shall befall the faithless among them a painful punishment.”(١

This verse also indicates that Christians had applied the word ‘god’ to Jesus Christ (‘a) and that they believed in his divinity. The Holy Qur’an refutes this belief and states .that there is no god except the One God

:Fifth verse

[Say, ‘What thing is greatest as witness?’ Say, ‘Allah! [He is“

.Sūrat al-Mā’idah ۵:۷۳ -١

witness between me and you, and this Qur’an has been revealed to me that I may warn thereby you and whomever it may reach.’ ‘Do you indeed bear witness that there are other gods besides Allah?’ Say, ‘I do not bear witness [to any such thing].’ Say, ‘Indeed He is the One God, and indeed I disown what you associate [with

(Him]'."(1)

This verse also clearly explains that they used to apply the word 'god' to other than Allah, and that they used to believe in multiple gods.

"Do you indeed bear witness that there are other gods besides Allah?"

It is clear that 'besides Allah' bespeaks their belief that their gods were latitudinal, not longitudinal, to Allah.

Sixth verse:

"Certainly We sent Noah to his people. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah! You have no other god besides Him. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous day'."(2)

Noah ('a) being charged with the responsibility of telling his people not to worship other gods besides the One God clearly proves that during Noah's era, people used to believe in the existence of other gods besides Allah, the One, who were latitudinal not longitudinal with Allah. If they believed that their gods were longitudinal to Allah and dependent on Him, there was no reason for them to raise objections against Noah for calling on them to worship the One God. The likes of this verse are the verses:

"And to [the people] of 'Ād, Hūd, their brother, he said, 'O my people, worship Allah.

1- Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۹.
2- Sūrat al-A'rāf ۷:۵۹.

You have no other god besides Him'."(1)

"And to [the people of] Thamūd, Sālih, their brother, he said, 'O my people, worship Allah! You have no other god besides Him'."(2)

"And to [the people of Midian], Shu'ayb, their brother, he said, 'O my people, worship

Allah! You have no other god besides Him. There has certainly come to you a manifest (proof from your Lord'."(3)

:Seventh verse

And Allah has said, 'Do not worship two gods. Indeed, He is the One God, so be in awe" (of Me [alone]'."(4)

It can be inferred from the above quoted verse that polytheists used to fear their idols lest they harm them and/or be a hindrance to good coming their way. This shows that they used to believe that besides Allah, their idols were either benevolent or malevolent, and that their idols were independent in controlling cosmic affairs. "Do not worship two gods" means do not believe in more than One God, certainly not that two !gods are forbidden but more than two gods are permissible

The third proof: simultaneity

The third proof for the assertion that polytheists used to conceive their idols as being latitudinal to Allah and independent of Him is the word 'ma'a' (besides, or simultaneous with) in the phrase 'ma'allāh' (besides Allah). 'Ma'allāh', which has been employed sixteen times in the Holy Qur'an, means that idols were construed as being .equal and the same as Allah

:We will hereunder study some of these verses

Say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, and peace be to His servants whom He has chosen.'" Is Allah

p: ۴۷

۱- Sūrat al-A'rāf ۷:۶۵.

۲- Sūrat al-A'rāf ۷:۷۳.

۳- Sūrat al-A'rāf ۷:۸۵.

۴- Sūrat al-Nahl ۱۶:۵۱.

better, or the partners they ascribe [to Him]? Is not He who created the heavens and

the earth, and sends down for you water from the sky, whereby He grows delightful gardens, whose trees you could never cause to grow...?(۱)

What! Is there a god besides Allah? Rather, they are a lot who equate [others with Allah]. Is not He who made the earth an abode [for you], and made rivers flowing through it, and set firm mountains for it, and set a barrier between the two seas...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Rather, most of them do not know. Is not He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress, and makes you the earth's successors...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Little is the admonition that you take. Is not He who guides you in the darkness of land and sea, and who sends the winds as harbingers of His mercy...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Exalted is Allah above [having] any partners they ascribe [to Him]. Is not He who originated the creation, then He will bring it back, and who provides for you from the sky and the earth...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Say, 'Produce your evidence, if you are truthful'."(۲)

The word 'besides' in the verses which says "Is there a god besides Allah" means 'equal to'. That is to say, is there a god equal to Allah? Do you

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۱- Ellipsis: the omitted phrase here and in the following verses (۶۱-۶۴) is 'better or the partners they ascribe to Him'.

۲- Sūrat al-Naml ۲۷:۵۹-۶۴.

conceive idols as being equal to Allah?

The fourth proof: incompatibility

point

It is one of the most important proofs in this discourse. The conclusion which is drawn from this demonstration is that [successful] managing of everything is contingent on unified management, not on polarized supervision. Polarized management leads to disarray in the system. Unity of the cosmic system leads us to the conclusion that

.there is one unified administrator

:First verse

Have they taken gods from the earth who raise [the dead]? Had there been gods in“ them(۱) other than Allah, they would surely have fallen apart. Clear is Allah, the Lord of (the Throne, of what they allege [concerning Him].”(۲

:Second verse

Allah has not taken any offspring, neither is there any god besides Him, for then each“ god would take away what he created, and some of them would surely rise up against (others. Clear is Allah of what they allege!”(۳

These two verses mean that the existence of two gods gives rise to disarray in the cosmic system. Disarray arises in instances where a number of independent .administrators, each with the power to make independent decisions, exist

If gods are latitudinal with Allah and independent of Him, they will have separate power, as well as think about rising up against other gods. But if we believe that they are longitudinal with Allah, all the gods would be under the control of only one power, and no creature besides Allah would have the power to reign over another. In our opinion, this is the strongest demonstration for proving idolatrous beliefs, and

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۱- That is, in the heavens and the earth.

۲- Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۹۱.

۳- Sūrat al-Mu’minūn ۲۳:۹۱.

.it is very clear

’Fifth proof: ‘besides Allah

Among the people are those who set up compeers besides Allah, loving them as if“ loving Allah—but the faithful have a more ardent love for Allah—though the

wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power, altogether, belongs (to Allah, and that Allah is severe in punishment."(۱

The phrase 'besides Allah' is equivalent to duality, that is to say there is polarity between the idols and Allah, in such a way that idols are on one side and Allah is on the opposite end. Jesus Christ ('a) raised the dead to life and cured the sick on the permission of Allah [bi idhnillāh], not besides Allah [min dūnillāh]; that is to say, Jesus Christ ('a) did not have any kind of independence in curing the sick and raising the dead [back to life]. Jesus' deeds are Allah's deeds, and there is no duality in their .deeds

It is to be concluded that whatever activities creatures other than Allah do in the .cosmic system are done with the permission of Allah, not besides Him

Sixth proof: belittlement if idols

point

Allah has belittled idols as not being a source of any effect. He states that whatever is in the cosmic system belongs to Allah; it is Allah who sends down the rains, who manages the sky and the earth, and then asks idolaters to show what their idols have .done

:First verse

Say, 'Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'Allah!' Say, 'Have you then" taken others besides Him for guardians, who have no control

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.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۶۵ -۱

over their own benefit or harm?' Say, 'Are the blind one and the seer equal? Or are darkness and light equal?' Have they set up for Allah partners who have created something like Allah's creation which causes them to be confused? Say, 'Allah is the (Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount'."(۱

:Second verse

He created the heavens without any pillars that you may see, and cast firm“ mountains in the earth lest it should shake with you, and He has scattered in it every kind of animal. And He sent down water from the sky and caused every splendid kind [of plant] to grow in it. This is the creation of Allah. Now, show Me what others besides (Him have created. Rather, the wrongdoers are in manifest error!”(۲

He created the heavens without any pillars that you may see” has been construed as“ :having two meanings

۱. He created the heavens without any pillars, as you too can see that there are no .pillars holding the heavens

۲. He created the heavens without any visible pillars, but it has invisible pillars.

Seventh proof: polytheism is a great injustice

When Luqmān said to his son, as he advised him: ‘O my son! Do not ascribe any“ (partners to Allah. Polytheism is indeed a great injustice’.”(۳

In the book of Qur’anic exegesis entitled “Kishāf”, this verse has been thus interpreted, “Polytheism is a great injustice because it equates Allah, the Owner of all ”.graces and blessings, with idols, which are absolutely in need

’Eighth proof: the terms ‘partner’ and ‘idolatry

point

More than twenty verses in the Holy Qur’an have employed

۱- ۱۳:۱۶ Sūrat al-Ra‘d.

۲- ۳۱:۱۰-۱۱ Sūrat Luqmān.

۳- ۳۱:۱۳ Sūrat Luqmān.

the terms partner [sharīk] and idolatry [shirk]. Likewise, we Muslims repeatedly say, “I

the terms partner [sharīk] and idolatry [shirk]. Likewise, we Muslims repeatedly say, "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah the One; there is no partner for Him."

Allah's prohibition that idols ought not to be taken as His partners indicates that idolaters used to conceive their idols as Allah's equals. Partner assumes equality.

The Wahhābīs' error

If the Wahhābīs had paid heed to the meanings of these terms, they would never have accused the Shī'ahs of being polytheists because the Shī'ahs do not at all believe that the Noble Prophet (s) and Imāms ('a) are Allah's equals in a latitudinal manner. They hold that whatever the Noble Prophet (s) and Imāms ('a) do, such as interceding and alleviating the problems of believers, are all done with the permission of Allah and the powers which He has entrusted to them. These holy people ('a) can perform miracles whenever Allah wills and they would not be able to do so without His will. They are Allah's worthy and noble servants. They take pride in being Allah's servants, and a servant cannot be equal to his master.

Ninth proof: lack of ownership

"Say, 'Invoke them whom you claim [to be gods] besides Allah! They do not control [even] an atom's weight in the heavens or the earth, nor have they any share in [either of] them, nor is any of them(1) His supporter'."(2)

This verse refutes idolatrous delusions that idols have a share of ownership in the heavens and the earth. It can be inferred from this refutation that idolaters imagined that

p: ۵۲

۱- That is, the gods worshipped by the polytheists.

۲- Sūrat Saba' ۳۴:۲۲.

idols have a share in the heavens and the earth.

Support and help are only applicable where the power of the giver of support and help

is other than the power of the receiver of support and help. For instance, when one man cannot manage to lift a weighty thing, another man comes to help him and as a result of these two powers, the weight is lifted. These two powers are independent of each other and are latitudinal with each other.

If two individuals were longitudinal in such a way that all the powers of the second individual were derived from the first one, it would not be true to call the second one a helper. It can be deduced from the above quoted verse that idolaters believed their idols had powers independent of Allah's powers and helped Allah to manage cosmic affairs. The following verse also proves this same issue:

"Say, 'Tell me about your partners [you ascribe to Allah] whom you invoke besides Allah? Show me what [part] of the earth they have created. Do they have any share in the heavens?' Have We given them a scripture so that they stand on a manifest proof thereof? Rather the wrongdoers do not promise one another [anything] except delusion. Indeed Allah sustains the heavens and the earth lest they should fall apart, and if they were to fall apart there is none who can sustain them except Him. Indeed, He is All-forbearing, All-forgiving."(۱)

Verses ۴-۱۶ of Sūrat al-Ahqāf also prove the

۱- Sūrat Fātir ۳۵:۴۰-۴۱.

above.

Tenth proof: independence in affecting cosmic affairs

"Whatever mercy Allah unfolds for the people, no one can withhold it; and whatever He withholds, no one can release it after Him,(۱) and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise."(۲)

Idolaters used to believe that besides Allah, someone was effective in either granting or withholding graces. It is for this reason that Allah refutes this belief in the above

.quoted verse

Eleventh proof: invitation to monotheism

Indeed it was they who, when they were told, 'There is no god except Allah,' used to" (be disdainful, and [they would] say, 'Shall we abandon our gods for a crazy poet?'"(۳)

It is clear from this invitation extended to idolaters to worship the One God and from their disdainful refusal to submit to monotheism and abandon their gods that they used to consider their gods as equals of Allah. They would have easily forsaken their gods if they had believed that their gods were longitudinal with Allah and dependent .on Him

Twelfth proof: the Noble Prophet's invitation to monotheism

Has he reduced the gods to one God? This is indeed an odd thing! Their elite go about" [urging others]: 'Go and stand by your gods! This is indeed the desirable thing [to do].We did not hear of this in the latter-day creed.(۴) This is nothing but a (fabrication'."(۵)

In other words, the Noble Prophet's (s) invitation to monotheism and the Oneness of God is itself a proof that polytheists used to conceive their gods as independent of Allah. There was no reason to invite them to monotheism if they had held that their gods were dependent on Allah and merely His

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۱- That is, after His withholding it. Or 'no one can release it except Him'.

۲- Sūrat Fātir ۳۵:۲.

۳- Sūrat al-Sāffāt ۳۷:۳۵-۳۶.

۴- That is, in the polytheistic creed prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia.

۵- Sūrat Sād ۳۸:۵-۷.

.agents, and the polytheists themselves would not have turned down the invitation

Thirteenth proof: sincere devotion in religion

(Say, '[Only] Allah do I worship, putting exclusive faith in Him'."(1)"

Sincerity in religion is set against hypocrisy in religion. Insincere devotion and hypocrisy in religion occur once other creatures are believed to be equal with Allah and independently effective in the cosmic system. When man humbly submits to these creatures his worship for Allah intermixes with his worship for other creatures, .and his faith is no longer exclusive for Allah

Fourteenth proof: reference to primordial nature

Allah draws an example: a man jointly owned by several contending masters and a" man belonging entirely to one man: are the two equal in comparison?(2) All praise (belongs to Allah! But most of them do not know."(3

Mutashākasūn' (contending masters) means bad mannered individuals each of' whom has peculiar manners and opinions and every one of them gives their jointly .owned slave an order different from the order of the other master

A man belonging entirely to one man' means the monotheist who is sincerely devoted' .only to the One Master

In this verse, a parable has been recounted in order to convince man's conscience that belief in multiple gods is unreasonable. The worshipper of multiple deities is likened to a slave trying to please several masters. If creatures obeyed the commands of multiple gods, and every god commanded these creatures according to his own personal inclination, creatures would be confused as to which god they ought .to obey

It is very clear that this parable would only hold true once the

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.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۱۴ -۱

The parable compares the polytheist with the monotheist. The worshipper of - ۲ .multiple deities is likened to a slave trying to please several masters

.Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٢٩ -٣

masters (gods) are independent in decision-making and every one of them is an owner. It is in this case that this slave will be confused as to whom he should obey. If these masters were longitudinal with each other and all of them were under the .command of one master who issued all the orders, the slave would not be confused

This parable compares the polytheist with the monotheist; a man jointly owned by several contending masters refers to the polytheist and a man belonging entirely to one man alludes to the monotheist. Of course, it can be said that this parable is a .'clarification of the already discussed fourth proof called 'incompatibility

Fifteenth proof: detestation of monotheism

When Allah is mentioned alone, [thereat] shrink away the hearts of those who do not" believe in the Hereafter, but when others are mentioned besides Him, behold, they (rejoice!"(١

Aversion and detestation of monotheism are only conceivable once idols are believed to be Allah's equals. It is only in this case that refutation of multiple gods annoys .polytheists and mentioning the oneness of God leads to their aversion

Sixteenth proof: Sūrat al-Tawhīd

(Sixteenth proof: Sūrat al-Tawhīd(٢

Say, 'He is Allah, the One. Allah is the All-embracing. He neither begat, nor was" ".'begotten, Nor has He any equal

This Sūrah, which is a motto of monotheists, establishes the oneness of Allah, His Self-sufficiency, and negates any procreation from Him. At the end, it refutes His .having any partner

Nor has He any equal": Repudiation of an equal proves that idolaters used to" .conceive their idols as Allah's equals

Seventeenth proof: belief in the ownership of idols

Idolaters considered

.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۵ -۱

The Sūrah—also called Sūrat al-Ikhlās—is a statement of Islamic monotheism - ۲ which negates any kind of anthropomorphism that may compromise pure monotheism or tawhīd. It is called 'Sūrat al-Ikhlās' as it purges tawhīd of deviant ideas .and posits it in its exclusive purity

their idols as being latitudinal with Allah and having ownership. Of course, ownership bespeaks the equality of idols with Allah who would then be considered as the real .owners and all creatures would be dependent on them

Consider the following verse which proves that idolaters used to believe that their :idols possessed ownership

Say, 'Shall I take for a guardian [anyone] other than Allah, the Originator of the" heavens and the earth, who feeds and is not fed?' Say, 'I have been commanded to (be the first of those who submit [to Allah], and never be one of the polytheists'."(۱

Shall I take for a guardian [anyone] other than Allah": in the book of Qur'anic exegesis" entitled, "Majma' al-Bayān", guardian has been interpreted as owner; that is to say, shall I take for an owner anyone except Allah? It asks whether I should take idols as my guardians and owners? It can be understood thereof that polytheists considered .their idols as their owners, and thus believed in their ownership

Eighteenth proof: using the word lord for idols

Say, 'Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things?' No soul" does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another's burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which (you used to differ."(۲

Lord [rabb] means manager, and managing and lordship occur under the auspices of independence. That is to say, idols, just like Allah, possess management. So far eighteen proofs have been presented to demonstrate that

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Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۴ -۱.

Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۶۴ -۲.

idolaters used to believe that their idols were independent of Allah and latitudinal with Him.

Now, we will embark on examining and critiquing the demonstrations of people who assert that idolaters used to believe that their idols were longitudinal with Allah and that they did not conceive them as being independent of Him.

Reasons for asserting that idolaters used to believe that idols were longitudinal with Allah and dependent on Him and critiquing those reasons

What is meant by idols being longitudinal with Allah is that polytheists used to believe that their idols were merely an intermediary devoid of any independence.

One reason why some eminent scholars have asserted that idolaters used to believe that their idols and that their management of affairs was dependent on Allah is Qur'anic verses which apply the word intercessor [shafī'] to idols. The most explicit verse which bespeaks this belief is:

"They worship besides Allah that which neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit, and they say, 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say, 'Will you inform Allah about something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?' Immaculate is He and exalted above [having] any partners that they ascribe [to Him]."(۱)

Al-Mīzān's statement regarding idolatrous beliefs

Two kinds of arguments have been put forward to explain that idols had no

independence [and were not equated with Allah by idolaters]. We will first quote what :"has been said in "Al-Mīzān

Idolaters used to worship idols with the intention of gaining nearness to the Lord of" idols and thus get close to Allah, the High. Polytheists used to say, 'We have no access to the Lord of lords on account of being

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.Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۱۸ -۱

contaminated with sin and being entrapped in the material world; His threshold is holier than can be attained by us, and there is not the least affinity between Him and us. Therefore, it is necessary for us to seek nearness to Him through someone who is more beloved and nearer to Him, and to whom He has entrusted the management of creatures, namely the Lord of idols. Further, it is not feasible to find access to the Lord of idols except through subordinate idols and talismans. We worship idols so that their lord may intercede with Allah on our behalf and thus earn goodness and repel evil. Therefore, they truly used to worship idols so that they and the Lord of idols may (intercede with Allah on their behalf.(۱

This indicates that idolaters used to consider their idols as being dependant upon, not ".independent of Allah

The meaning of idols' intercession

What is meant by idols' intercession? Is it intercession in the Hereafter or in the ?world

There are two different views in this regard: "Majma' al-Bayān"(۲) and "Kishāf"(۳) hold it as eschatological intercession, but the author of "Al-Mīzān" maintains that it means worldly intercession. The author of "Al-Mīzān" asserts that idolaters wanted their idols, or the lord of their idols, to intercede with Allah on their behalf so that He may shower goodness on them, solve their worldly problems and repel evil from them. Idolaters did not believe in the Resurrection, that is why eschatological intercession is

refuted and worldly intercession is affirmed. I also hold that

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.Al-Mīzān, vol. ۱۰, p. ۲۷, exegesis of the above quoted verse -۱
.Majma' al-Bayān, vol. ۵, p. ۱۶۷, exegesis of the above quoted verse -۲
.Kishāf, vol. ۲, p. ۱۸۵, exegesis of the above quoted verse -۳

polytheists did not believe in the existence of the Hereafter. This, however, calls for .explanation, which will be offered later

Another explanation asserting that idols lacked independence

The terms 'intercession' and 'intercessor' also indicate that idols were longitudinal, .not latitudinal, with Allah

Idolaters used to say that only the lord of idols can ask Allah to solve their problems. If they were independently effective, they would have directly solved their worshippers' problems without Allah's help. If idolaters used to consider their idols as independently effective and capable of solving their problems, they would have .directly asked the idols to solve their problems without the need for mediation

Idolaters used to say, "These are our intercessors with Allah". This itself indicates that idolaters did not believe that their idols were as equally effective as Allah, but that their power was gotten from Allah, which bespeaks belief that idols were conceived as being dependant on Allah. Intercession implicitly means that the one who asks for intercession has a problem which the intercessor is not capable of solving but can intercede with the one who is able to solve that merely on account of the honor and .respect that he has

:The following are the verses similar to the above quoted verse

Look! [Only] exclusive faith is worthy of Allah, and those who take guardians besides" Him [claiming,] We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah, Allah will judge between them concerning that about which they differ. Indeed, Allah does not

.guide someone who is a liar and an ingrate

p: ۶۰

Had Allah intended to take a son, He could have chosen from those He has created (whatever He wished. Immaculate is He! He is Allah, the One, the All-paramount."(۱

Blessed is He to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and" whatever is between them, and with Him is the knowledge of the Hour, and to Him you will be brought back. Those whom they invoke besides Him have no power of intercession, except those who are witness to the truth and who know [for whom to intercede]. If you ask them, 'Who created them?' they will surely say, 'Allah.' Then where do they stray? And his(۲) pliant: 'My Lord! Indeed these are a people who will (not have faith!' So disregard them, and say, 'Peace!' Soon they will know."(۳

Shall I take gods besides Him? If the All-beneficent desired to cause me any distress," (their intercession will not avail me in any way, nor will they rescue me."(۴

Two assertions that idolaters used to believe that their idols were longitudinal with Allah

point

۱. In this regard, "Majma' al-Bayān" says, "Idolaters used to imagine that worshipping idols is more important than worshipping Allah himself. Worshipping Allah was ".considered better once it was done through worshipping idols, not directly

۲. What idolaters mean by "These are our intercessors with Allah" should be that they intercede with Allah's permission because they do not possess anything, yet Allah reprimands them that he has not given idols the permission to intercede with Him on .behalf of anyone

Critique of Al-Mīzān's statement

Firstly, the author of "Al-Mīzān" has not provided Qur'anic proof for his assertion

p: ۶۱

.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۳-۴ -۱

.(That is, of the Apostle of Allah (s -۲

.Sūrat al-Zukhruf ۴۳:۸۵-۸۹ -۳

.Sūrat Yā Sīn ۳۶:۲۳ -۴

and has merely contented himself with recounting historical events, which lack authoritativeness and cannot be adduced as proof. Secondly, the above quoted statement contradicts some other statements in "Al-Mīzān"; for instance, the :exegesis of verses ۶۸ to ۸۶ of Sūrat al-Mā'idah says

Belief that the cosmos has one creator is one of the perennial issues held by thinkers" and its roots lie in man's primordial nature. If we properly meditate about idolatry, we will see that they initially used to believe that their idols were their intercessors with Allah on the basis of monotheism, and used to say that they worshipped idols so that they may gain nearness to Allah. They later abandoned this belief and came to believe (that idols were independent of Allah and had fundamentality vis-à-vis Allah."(۱

:A number of issues can be inferred from this statement

The first is that monotheism [tawhīd] is innate. Every man's primordial nature is monotheistic, and according to their natural disposition all human beings believe that .Allah is one

The second is that idolaters initially used to believe that idols were dependant on Allah, but with the passage of time, their beliefs changed and they came to believe idols were independent of Allah. The first part is not acceptable to us, but the second part indicates that the author of "Al-Mīzān" also held that idolaters finally came to believe that their idols were equal and latitudinal with Allah. This agrees with what we .hold concerning idolatrous beliefs

Also, Al-Mīzān's exegesis of verses ۳۶-۴۹ of Sūrat Hūd

.Al-Mīzān, vol. ۶, p. ۱۰۹ -۱

further explains what has been said above regarding idolatrous beliefs that idols are :dependent on Allah. The following is a summary of what “Al-Mīzān” says

It has often been imagined that asking the Noble Prophet (s) and the Imāms (‘a) for“ intercession and to alleviate one’s problems, going on pilgrimage to their mausoleums, as well as honoring and kissing their holy shrines is idolatry, and that Allah has forbidden these practices because they entail considering someone other than Allah as being effective, a belief similar to what was held by idolaters, who used ’.to say, ‘We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah

Worshipping any being other than Allah is polytheism, whether that being is a“ .prophet (‘a) or an imām (‘a) and/or an oppressor

Certainly, whoever implores the help of the Noble Prophet (s) and the Infallible“ Imāms (‘a) does not worship them nor believe that they are independent of Allah in assisting, but he makes them intermediaries between him and Allah because they are His beloved servants and earns Allah’s graces under the auspices of their .[intercession. This does not mean independence in conveyance [of graces

Allah censures polytheists because they used to believe in the independence of idols“ and used to conceive them as independent effectors; but when the Shī‘ahs make implorations for assistance, they never at all worship or consider the Noble Prophet .[(s) and the Imāms (‘a) as being independent [of Allah

The ones who raise objections and quibbles against the Shī‘ahs have to tell“

us what difference there is between kissing the Black Stone [hajar al-aswad] and the Ka‘bah and kissing holy shrines of the Noble Prophet (s) and Imāms (‘a); they consider .the former as unobjectionable and the latter as polytheism

If they respond that kissing the Ka‘bah is an exception, the invalidity of the response

is clear because polytheism is proved by rational evidence, and rational rules are without any exception. If kissing the Black Stone [hajar al-aswad] and the Ka'bah are the same as worship, then kissing holy shrines and imploring the help of the Noble Prophet (s) and the Infallible Imāms ('a) is also the same as worship and is not polytheism."(1)

Even if good points appear in Al-Mīzān's statement, but still this objection remains that there is a contradiction between its assertion that idolaters used to believe that their idols were independent of Allah and the earlier statement that they used to consider their idols as intermediaries between them and Allah.

Summary of Al-Mīzān's statements

It is possible to strike a balance between the contradictory statements of "Al-Mīzān" by saying that the report which indicates that idolaters used to consider their idols as being dependent on Allah refers to their original beliefs; that is to say, in the beginning, idolaters held that the universe has only one creator and idols are holy beings which mediate between Allah and His servants.

And those statements which say that idolaters used to believe that idols were independent of Allah indicate their later beliefs; convictions which they later came to

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۱- Al-Mīzān, vol. ۱۰, p. ۳۰۵; exegesis of Sūrat Hūd ۱۱:۳۶-۴۹.

hold after being deviated from their earlier beliefs. Therefore, those Qur'anic verses in which the word 'intercession' has been used such as "We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah" bespeak their initial beliefs and those verses which indicate that they considered their idols as independent refer to their later beliefs. But this differentiating between initial and later idolatrous beliefs is itself a historical account which is not based on any Qur'anic verse and is not authoritative.

An independent summary

It may be said that man possesses two faculties, the faculty of the intellect and the faculty of the imagination. When idolaters examined idolatry with their intellect, they used to admit that the cosmos has only One Creator and Governor, as many Qur'anic verses say that if idolaters were asked who the creator of the heavens and the earth was, they would respond that it was Allah. According to this perspective, they used to consider their idols as intercessors which are dependent on Allah. But once they got deluded by their imagination and blind following of their ancestors, their primordial nature was suppressed and their illusions used to lead them into imagining that their idols were equal and independent of Allah.

Permitted and forbidden intercession

The intercession of an intercessor if considered as independent is prohibited in the Holy Qur'an, but the intercession of a dependent intercessor is permitted. The author of "Al-Mīzān" has comprehensively discussed this under the verse:

"Beware of the Day when no soul shall compensate for another, neither any intercession shall

be accepted from it, nor any ransom shall be received from it, nor will they be helped."(۱)

The author of "Al-Mīzān" explains that intercession with Allah's authorization is permitted, but intercession without Allah's authorization, where the intercessor is considered as independent, is forbidden.

We have presented these two beliefs and clarified that intercession does not need to be longitudinal, but can be latitudinal as well. Idolaters used to believe that their idols can intercede with Allah on their behalf despite being independent. This is in fact our assertion.

In order for this assertion to become clear, we will adduce a summary of what "Al-Mīzān", under the title "Kalām fī Ma'nī al-Tawhīd fī Qur'ān" (The Meaning of Tawhīd in

:the Qur'an)(۲), says in this regard

The monism of idolaters was numerical monism and the monotheism of monotheists" is absolute Oneness of Allah; that is to say, monotheism which does not have a second. Whoever delves deeper into Islamic sciences will doubtless understand that monotheistic problems are among the most difficult and complex Islamic propositions .from the viewpoint of conception and cognition

Of course, intellectuals will have varying deductions and affirmations of such a problem because human beings are not the same; some people are intelligent, some are dull and others are average and this is what causes differences in understanding. :This matter has been emphasized by the Holy Qur'an, when it states

Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only those who possess" (intellect take admonition."(۳

In spite of being innate for

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۴۸ -۱
.Al-Mīzān, vol. ۱, p. ۱۶۷, exegesis of the above quoted verse -۲
.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۹ -۳

all, everyone's concept of monotheism is different. Idolaters came to a stage where they believed that the idols they were making from wood or stone were Allah's equals and partners and used to worship and submit to them in the same way that they worshipped Allah. They even went so far as to leave Allah for idols, and imagined that .idols had overcome and subdued Allah

It is for this reason that they opted for idols and completely turned their backs on Allah. And the idolater came to ascribe the attribute of oneness and unity, which was a prerogative of Allah, to idols and said that God is one in the same way that an idol is one. Of course, numerical unity means that Allah is one god and an idol is one god, and

idols are [countable] gods. They used to fantasize that every one of the idols is a god and that is why they asked with surprise, when the multiplicity of gods was negated:

"Has he reduced the gods to one god? This is indeed an odd thing!"(۱)

The Holy Qur'an used to invite them to real and absolute monotheism. The Holy Qur'an used to invite them to Divine Unity which is unique and matchless, namely the Unlimited God, who has subdued all existents and is absolutely Self-sufficient. The rest of existents are needy and they are a shadow of that Real Being. Such a being can never be numerical. It is equal to one. Every other being which

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۱- Sūrat Sād ۳۸:۵-۷.

can be pointed at is related to it as an attachment which exists under its auspices. He has no equal, and therefore no second or third.

The monotheism which the Holy Qur'an presents is above numerical monotheism. Among the hadīths, only in "Nahj al-Balāghah" has Imām 'Alī ('a) explained absolute monotheism in the best way. His Holiness ('a) has refuted all kinds of unity which denote multiplicity of the Divine Essence of Allah."(۱)

A point worth paying heed to in "Al-Mīzān" is that it has clearly explained that idolaters not only used to believe that their idols were latitudinal with Allah and independent of Him, but went so far as to leave Allah for idols, whom they conceived as being the real managers of the universe. This statement of "Al-Mīzān" has correctly explained idolatrous beliefs.

Conclusion

With regard to the aforementioned issues, belief that idols were intercessors does not denote negating their independence, but that idols could either solve the problems of idolaters themselves or ask Allah to solve them. Considering that idolaters believed that Allah had been subdued by idols, it is likely that they conjectured that idols could

.force Him to solve their problems

It can also be said that idolaters used to believe that both Allah and idols used to jointly solve their problems, even if Allah's power was more than theirs. This also denotes independence for idols, no matter how limited. Independence did not mean that idols had all the powers which Allah possessed, but did have the power to

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.Al-Mīzān, vol. ۶, p. ۹۰, exegesis of verses ۶۸-۸۶ of Sūrat al-Mā'idah -۱

.solve some of the problems without Allah's permission

Therefore, it is possible to strike a compromise between independence and .intercession

Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion

Āyatullāh Sayyid 'Izz al-Dīn Zanjānī, concerning polytheism and idolatrous beliefs, :asserts

Polytheism is of two kinds; latitudinal polytheism which conceives idols as being equal" with Allah, and longitudinal polytheism. Idolaters held the second kind of polytheism. A number of deviated groups believed in the first kind of polytheism; such groups as the Zoroastrians, who conceived that Yazdān was the manifestation of goodness and Ahrīman was the manifestation of badness; as well as the Christians who believed in the Trinity, which consists of god the father, god the son (Jesus Christ) and god the .holy spirit

But the idolaters who had stood up against the prophets ('a) and were called mushrik (polytheist or idolater) used to believe that their idols were dependent on Allah. Idolaters did not believe in a partner as regards creation. Their only doctrinal fault was that they believed that Allah had a partner in lordship, in the sense that they had fixed idols as intermediaries and believed that their idols held a lofty position before .Allah

:Belief that idols are longitudinal with Allah is of two kinds

One kind is permitted by Allah and the other kind is not permitted by Allah. In the case of being permitted, Allah has granted his servants authorization to turn to those intermediaries for help and ask these mediators to alleviate their problems. This is ,contrary to the second kind, where Allah has not granted such permission

.but is based on blind imitation of their forefathers

The fault of idolatrous beliefs was that they belonged to the second kind, which has not been permitted by Allah. That is to say, their belief that idols are longitudinal with Allah and that they are go-betweens between Allah and created beings was not based on any rational proof and demonstrative reasoning. It is for this reason that :they were reproached by Allah. This verse bespeaks this issue

The polytheists will say, 'Had Allah wished, we would not have ascribed any partner" [to Him], nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.' Those who were before them had denied(۱) likewise until they tasted Our punishment. Say, 'Do you have any [revealed] knowledge that you can produce before us? You follow nothing (but conjectures, and you do nothing but surmise'."(۲

Idolaters used to accuse Allah of giving them permission to take idols as their .mediators with Allah

:The following verse also denotes this issue

How could I fear what you ascribe [to Him] as [His] partners, when you do not fear" ascribing to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority to you? So ([tell me,] which of the two sides has a greater right to safety, if you know?"(۳

The key word in these verses is that Allah tells idolaters that they hold a belief for which they cannot produce any demonstrative reasoning and logic, and that Allah has ,not given them the permission to take idols as their mediators with Him. Yes

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Or 'those who were before them had lied likewise', in accordance with an alternate -١ .(reading. (See al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, and al-Ṭabrisī

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:١۴٨ -٢

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:٨١ -٣

polytheists of the Arabian Peninsula used to believe that idols are dependent on Allah and that there is only one creator for the cosmos, as the following verse explicitly :states

If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth, and disposed the sun and" the moon?' They will surely say, 'Allah.' Then where do they stray? Allah expands the provision for whomever He wishes of His servants, and tightens it for him. Indeed, Allah has knowledge of all things. And if you ask them, 'Who sends down water from the sky, with which He revives the earth after its death?' They will surely say, 'Allah.' (Say, 'All praise belongs to Allah!' But most of them do not apply reason."(١

Therefore, these verses indicate that idolaters used to consider their idols as intercessors and did not believe in their independence vis-à-vis Allah, and Allah censured them because they had conceived this belief out of conjecture, without having any proof and demonstrative reasoning, and without any permission from .Allah

The difference between idolaters and us, the Shī'ahs, who believe that the Noble Prophet (s) and the Imāms ('a) are intercessors, is that we have Allah's permission to take the Infallibles ('a) as our mediators with Him while idolaters did not have such .permission

If their belief had been based on proof and demonstrative reasoning, there would not have been any objection against it, in the same way that there is no objection against Muslims imploring help from the Black Stone [hajar al-aswad], itself

.Sūrat al-'Ankabūt ٢٩:٦١-٦٣ -١

.a stone, because they have proof and demonstrative reasoning for its permissibility

Idolaters never considered their idols as independent gods to worship, but as their :mediators with Allah, as this verse indicates

Look! [Only] exclusive faith is worthy of Allah, and those who take guardians besides" Him [claiming,] 'We only worship them so that they may bring us nearer to Allah,' Allah will indeed judge between them concerning that about which they differ. Indeed, Allah (does not guide someone who is a liar and an ingrate."(١

Their religious rites, such as animal sacrifices and others, were done with the intention of gaining nearness to idols so that they may mediate between Allah and (them (i.e., idolaters)."(٢

A study and critique of Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion

It ought not to be left unsaid that his assertion is very different from the statements of his mentor, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī. As has already been explained, in "Al-Mīzān", 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī has stated that idolaters initially used to believe that idols are longitudinal with Allah, but later deviated from this belief and came to hold that idols are independent of Allah. 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī states that idolaters went so far as to leave Allah for idols, believing that He had been subdued by them. They called their .idols gods and considered Allah as numerically one

It appears that Āyatullāh Zanjānī did not thoroughly examine Qur'anic verses about idolatry and only focused on his opinion when interpreting these verses. Previous to this, we comprehensively examined verses which indicate that idolaters used to believe that their idols were independent of Allah and presented

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.Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٣ -١

.Mi'yār al-Shirk fī al-Qur'ān, pp. ٣٣-٤١ -٢

.eighteen proofs for this assertion

We advise readers of this book to refer to previous discussions. Saying that idolaters used to believe that idols are longitudinal with Allah but that their belief was not sanctioned by Allah cannot by itself solve the problem, but calls for a detailed discussion, a part of which has already passed and the rest of the discussion will come .later

We concur with Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion that idolaters used to believe that the cosmos has only one creator, and we thoroughly discussed this under the title "Praiseworthy Idolatrous Beliefs". But this admission by idolaters that the cosmos has only one creator does not necessitate the belief that idols are longitudinal with Allah, .but is also compatible with the belief that they are latitudinal with Him

The author of "Al-Mīzān", ʿAllāmah Tabātabāʾī, has interpreted those verses which indicate idolatrous beliefs that idols are longitudinal with Allah as bespeaking initial idolatrous beliefs, and he has interpreted those verses which indicate that idolaters .held that idols are latitudinal with Allah as bespeaking later idolatrous beliefs

We, however, have interpreted these two sets of verses differently. We have interpreted those verses which indicate idolatrous beliefs that idols are longitudinal with Allah as meaning that idolaters used to rationally conceive the oneness of Allah by means of their reason, but were misled and deluded into believing that idols were latitudinal with Allah and independent of Him in their actions. We have also explained that sometimes idolaters used to believe that their idols

p: ۷۳

.were intermediaries between them and Allah

The author of this work is of the belief that idolaters used to believe that their idols were latitudinal with Allah right from the beginning, and this has been clearly .demonstrated by previously adduced proofs

A thorough response and critique of certain parts of Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion

point

.Permissible intercession is longitudinal and forbidden intercession is latitudinal

In various verses, forbidden intercession has been enumerated and also, permissible intercession has been mentioned. In brief, it ought to be known that verses which forbid intercession are related to circumstances where the intercessor is deemed as independent in alleviating problems, and permissible intercession is related to circumstances where the intercessor is dependent on Allah and longitudinal with Him. :For more explanation, we will initially adduce verses that are related to this subject

:First verse

He knows that which is before them and that which is behind them, and they do not" intercede except for someone He approves of, and they are apprehensive due to (their fear of Him."(١

:Second verse

Intercession will not avail that Day except from him whose word the All-beneficent" (allows and approves."(٢

:Third verse

(Intercession is of no avail with Him except for those whom He permits."(٣"

:Fourth verse

point

(Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission?"(۴"

There are in the Holy Qur'an other verses similar to the aforementioned ones. The purport of all of them is that one type of intercession is permissible and another type is forbidden. In other words, one kind of intercession has external existence and .another kind does not have external existence

Our assertion is that idolaters used to believe in forbidden intercession

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۱- Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ۲۱:۲۸.

۲- Sūrat Ṭā Hā ۲۰:۱۰۹.

۳- Sūrat Saba’ ۳۴:۲۳.

۴- Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵۵.

or independent intercession, duly rejected by the Qur’an. If polytheists had believed in intercession contingent upon Allah’s permission, there was no need for the revelation of verses to disapprove of them because their belief would have been the same as that of monotheists.

The meaning of intercession with Allah’s permission

The phrase ‘with Allah’s permission’ in Qur’anic verses has been interpreted in several ways; for instance, in some verses the criterion has been Allah’s pleasure. “Al-Mīzān” states that different expressions indicate different meanings, but it can be gathered from “Majma‘ al-Bayān” that different expressions denote one and the same meaning. The author of this book(۱) also believes that different expressions mean one and the same thing. What is important is that the actual meaning of ‘intercession with Allah’s permission’ should be clarified.

Allah’s pleasure with the intercession of intercessors means that there in no polarization or opposition between Allah’s pleasure and the pleasure of intercessors. In reality, Allah’s pleasure manifests itself in the pleasure of intercessors.

In other words, Allah’s pleasure is fulfilled through the pleasure of intercessors. On the contrary, the pleasure of intercessors is dependent upon Allah’s pleasure. The choice of Allah is loved by intercessors, and reciprocally the choice of intercessors is loved by Allah; it is for this reason the He has entrusted the examination of His servants’ deeds to them.

One of the ways to attain Allah's mercy is to get in touch with His worthy servants; that is to say, these interceding servants are so high that every one who gets in touch with them

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۱- A Study of Polytheism and Idolatry in the Qur'an.

gains access to a higher level of existence. The Imāms ('a) are the loftiest level of Allah's grace. Imām al-Sādiq ('a) interpreted the verse,

"To Allah belong the best of names, so supplicate Him by them"(۱)

as "Verily, we are Allah's best names; the [good] deeds of a servant who does not know us are not acceptable."(۲)

The late Āyatullāh Bahā' al-Dīnī, a very pious and erudite mystic, thus explains the above quoted hadīth, "A name denotes meaning. Our Imāms ('a) also represent the Attributes of Allah the High. Whoever studies the forbearance, theoretical and practical knowledge, power as well as other beautiful qualities of the Imāms ('a) will discover the repository and source of these Attributes, namely Allah.

Every person who enquires into the erudition of 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a) will discern that it is not a kind of acquired knowledge, that it has a fountainhead, and that fountainhead is Allah. One will be led from power and miracles of the Imāms ('a) to its source, Allah. Likewise, the rest of the beautiful attributes of the Imāms ('a) all guide us to Allah."(۳)

Whoever gets attached to an Infallible Imām ('a) gets connected to a sea of perfection. Our Infallible Imāms ('a) are like rivers which flow into an endless ocean (Allah), and we are like tributaries which get connected to the ocean by means of these rivers, and there is no separation between these three. We get connected to the boundless ocean by getting attached to the rivers. Whoever

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.Sūrat al-A‘rāf ٧:١٨٠ -١

Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn, vol. ٢, p. ١٠٣, exegesis of the above quoted verse from Usūl -٢ .al-Kāfī

Remarked in an academic session on ethics which the author of this book attended -٣ .in person

gets attached to Imām al-Husayn (‘a) gets attached to the Noble Prophet (s), and whoever gets connected to the Noble Prophet (s) gets connected to Allah because the pleasure of Imām al-Husayn (‘a) is the pleasure of the Noble Prophet (s), and the pleasure of the Noble Prophet (s) is the pleasure of Allah. The Noble Prophet (s) and .the Imāms (‘a) are a series and levels of existence

But idolatrous beliefs with respect to intercession were not like this; they believed that idols are independent of Allah and have autonomous powers by which they alleviate man's problems. Idolaters were living in an environment where ignorance held sway. In order to make this assertion clear, we will cite an example from "Al-Mīzān" to show how superficial and illusory their outlook was, and how they used to .imagine that Allah, just like idols, can be bought and sold

Idolatrous beliefs described in Al-Mīzān

It has thus been written in the Qur'anic exegesis of "Al-Mīzān", "People of the world have gotten used to living on the basis of mutual social cooperation. A baker helps a doctor, and a doctor reciprocally assists a baker. The whole society is run on the basis of mutual cooperation. Sometimes, man is faced with a problem which compels him to ask other people to help him. In every society, there is a government presided over by .a ruler. Sometimes, the ruler punishes an offender

Whenever the offender wants to go unpunished, he looks for an intermediary whose support and influence over the ruler can

be used to escape punishment. In former nations, there existed idolaters who believed that the hereafter is exactly like this world, and the kind of relationships

which govern the Hereafter are exactly like the relations which govern worldly social relations. They used to imagine that in the Hereafter, just like in this world, problems .can be solved through intermediaries

They used to offer sacrifices and gifts to their idols so that they may be forgiven by idols if idols themselves got angry with them, and act as their intermediaries before .Allah in the event that He is displeased with them

They used to think that they could thus escape Allah's retribution. Sometimes, they even used to bury their dead with weapons so that they may be able to defend themselves in the other world, and at times they used to bury a man together with a slave girl so that she may be his spouse in the Hereafter, and/or with a strong and well-built fighter so that he may defend the dead man from other people's attacks in the Afterworld. Their conception of the Hereafter was exactly like their perception of :this world. The Holy Qur'an thus dismisses their beliefs

Certainly, you have come to Us alone, just as We created you the first time, and left" behind whatever We had bestowed on you. We do not see your intercessors with you, who you claimed to be [Our] partners in deciding you[r] [fate]. Certainly, all links ,between you have been cut

(and what you used to claim has forsaken you!"(۱

Here, it is advisable to adduce verses which indicate that idolaters used to believe in independent not dependent intercession, so that the invalidity of Āyatullāh Zanjānīs' .assertion can be clearly shown

Polytheistic beliefs that idols intercede independently

point

There are a number of verses in the Holy Qur'an which denote that idolaters used to .believe that the intercession of idols is independent, not longitudinal

:First verse

Have they taken intercessors besides Allah? Say, 'What! Even though they have no" control over anything and cannot apply reason?' Say, 'All intercession rests with Allah. To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; then you will be brought (back to Him'."(۲

There are a number of clues in this verse which indicate that idolaters used to believe .that their idols used to intercede independently

First Clue: what the above quoted verses mean is that all help rests with Allah. This is a clue that the meaning of intercession in the sentence "Have they taken intercessors besides Allah?" is help and assistance. That is to say, have you taken idols as your helpers and supporters despite that all assistance is in the hands of Allah? That aid .that you are seeking from idols belongs to Allah

This clue makes it clear that idolaters construed the intercession of idols as assistance to them, and they used to believe that their idols were capable of helping them independently, and solve whatever problem they were faced with. That Allah has differentiated between His intercession and that of idols clarifies that

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Sūrat al-Mā'idah ۵:۹۴. Refer to "Al-Mīzān", exegesis of verse ۴۸ of Sūrat al-Baqarah, -۱ which says, "Beware of the Day when soul shall compensate for another, neither any intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any ransom shall be received from it, nor ".will they be helped

.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۳-۴۴ -۲

idolaters used to believe that the intercession of their idols was independent [of .[Allah's intercession

But according to the belief that the intercession of idols is longitudinal, there is no incompatibility between their intercession and that of Allah, because the source of this intercession is the same. For instance, we, the Shī'ahs, who believe that the Infallible

Imāms ('a) render assistance to us, maintain that the help which the Infallible Imāms ('a) give to us is longitudinal with Allah, and there is no incompatibility between the .assistance rendered to us by the Infallible Imāms ('a) and that it is given to us by Allah

Second Clue: If idolaters used to conceive their idols as being longitudinal with Allah in intercession, there was no need to for Allah to refute their ownership by saying, "Have they taken intercessors besides Allah? Say, 'What! Even though they have no control over anything and cannot apply reason?!'" This verse means that idols own nothing, and this refutation only makes sense once idols are considered as being latitudinal .with Allah

Third Clue: Verse ۴۵ of Sūrat al-Zumar, which is a continuation of the above quoted :verses, states

When Allah is mentioned alone, [thereat] shrink away the hearts of those who do not" believe in the Hereafter, but when others are mentioned besides Him, behold, they "!rejoice

This verse indicates that their idols were more important for them and that they used to rejoice once their idols were mentioned, but mentioning Allah alone used to make .their hearts shrink with sadness

This by itself shows that they used to believe that their idols were latitudinal with Allah and independent of Him

If idols are considered as being longitudinal with Allah, their belief would be like that of the Shī'ahs with respect to the Imāms ('a). In the same way that remembrance of the Imāms ('a) does not give rise to disgust at Allah, so also will the remembrance of Imāms ('a) not cause aversion to Allah because it will be exactly the same as .remembrance of Him. Disgust arises from polarity and separation

Fourth Clue: The fourth clue is the phrase 'besides Allah' in the verse "...but when others are mentioned besides Him, behold, they rejoice!" This phrase denotes

disagreement and contradiction between the intercession of idols and that of Allah, and this is compatible with the belief that the intercession of idols is independent of Allah and latitudinal with it; that is to say, the idolaters used to imagine that the .intercession of their idols is besides that of Allah

:Second verse

Certainly, you have come to us alone, just as We created you the first time, and left" behind whatever We had bestowed on you. We do not see your intercessors with you —those whom you claimed to be [Our] partners in [deciding] you[r] [fate]. Certainly, all (links between you have been cut, and what you used to claim has forsaken you!"(١

In "Majma' al-Bayān", the verse "...those whom you claimed to be [Our] partners in [deciding] you[r] [fate]" has thus been interpreted, "You used to

p: ٨١

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۹۴ -١

imagine that your idols are our partners."(١) In this verse, the word 'partners' has been applied to 'intercessors'. The above quoted verse means that idolaters used to imagine that their intercessors were Allah's partners and thus independent of Him in .affecting cosmic affairs

:Third verse

Shall I take gods besides Him? If the All-beneficent desired to cause me any distress" (their intercession will not avail me in any way, nor will they rescue me."(٢

This verse also indicates that idolaters used to believe that their idols intercede .independently, and there are clues in this regard

First Clue: The first clue is the phrase 'besides Him' in the verse "Shall I take gods "?besides Him

"?Second Clue: The word 'gods' in the verse, "Shall I take gods besides Him

Third Clue: The third clue is the verse "…their intercession will not avail me in any way, nor will they rescue me." This indicates that idolaters used to believe that idols could avail them in some way. They would only be able to help if they were independent of Him, because according to the belief that idols are longitudinal with Allah, there is no need to refute the intercession of idols because it would be exactly like that of Allah. Truly, if idolaters had held that idols are longitudinal with Allah in affecting cosmic affairs, there would have been no need to say, "If the All-beneficent desired to cause me any distress their intercession will not avail me in any way, nor will they rescue me", because according to

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.Majma' al-Bayān, vol. ۴, p. ۱۱۶ -۱

.Sūrat Yā Sīn ۳۶:۲۳ -۲

the belief that idols are longitudinal with Allah, the distress they would cause would considered as having been caused by Allah and the benefit they would grant would be .conceived as having been granted by Allah

It can be inferred from these verses that idolaters used to believe that the intercession of idols is independent intercession, not longitudinal and dependent, and thus the incorrectness of Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion that idolaters used to believe .in dependent intercession becomes apparent

A critique of another part of Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion

Āyatullāh Zanjānī claimed that idolaters never believed that idols are latitudinal with Allah, but that they are longitudinal with Him. He has, however, said that belief that .idols are longitudinal with Allah is of two kinds: ۱) permitted, and ۲) forbidden

Āyatullāh Zanjānī has said that the idolatrous belief that idols are longitudinal with .Allah was of the forbidden kind

We would like to prove that this division is not justifiable at all and being longitudinal is equal with being permitted. The assertion that belief can both be longitudinal with

.Allah and both forbidden is a baseless and invalid argument

It ought to be explained that permission refers to existential, not legislative, authorization. Existential authorization denotes affiliating a mediator with the category of causes and effects. If we assert that the Noble Prophet (s) and the Infallible Imāms ('a) are permitted to intercede and alleviate the problems of those who entreat them, we mean that they are affiliated with the series of causes in .connecting human beings with Allah

For instance, water is wet because Allah has

p: ۸۳

permitted it to be wet. If water was not existentially wet, it means that Allah had not permitted it to be wet. But the fact that it is wet indicates that Allah has given it the permission to be wet. It does not make sense to say that being wet is of two kinds, permitted and forbidden, because the very fact that it is wet means that it is .permitted to be wet, and not being wet means that it is not permitted to be wet

The effectiveness of [the intercession of] idols or any other mediator is also the same [as the above mentioned example]. If their intercession is effective, then it means that Allah has granted permission for it. If it is not effective, then He has not given authorization for it. In short, this discourse is existential, not mentally posited and relative. When it is asserted that the Infallible Imām ('a) is authorized to intercede, it means that Allah has granted him an existential level which connects to Allah whoever .is in touch with him ('a). This is a stable matter, whether one likes it or not

If idols are not permitted to intercede for anyone with Allah, it means that Allah has not placed them in the domain of causes and effects. This means that they are fundamentally not longitudinal with Him. They maybe believed as being longitudinal .with Him but have not been given permission to intercede for anyone

We assert that the necessity of being longitudinal with

p: ۸۴

Allah is being permitted to intercede with Him. The two cannot be separated. Being longitudinal with Allah means existing in the series of causes and effects and being effective in the existing cosmos because Allah has created them in this way. If Allah has not placed them in the series of causes and effects, then it means that they are not longitudinal with Him at all, and this is what not being permitted to intercede for .anyone with Him

We, therefore, conclude that dividing intercession into permitted and forbidden .intercession is null and void

A defense of Āyatullāh Zanjānī's assertion and a response to it

Āyatullāh Zanjānī may justify his assertion in this way, "What we mean by saying that idolaters used to believe that their idols are longitudinal with Allah is that they are used to believe that their idols are placed in the series of causes and effects, and are .effective in cosmic affairs due to the existential level granted to them by Allah

And what we mean by saying that their belief was not permitted by Allah is that He refutes having placed them in the series of causes and effects and having granted them the power to be effective in cosmic affairs. We also mean to say that Allah has stated that this belief is devoid of proof and demonstrative reasoning; that is to say, Allah has not placed idols in the series of causes and effects. This is what being .longitudinal without permission means

The response is that the basis of such a belief is incompatible with monotheism from

p: ۸۵

the viewpoint of affirmation or existence; that is to say, the belief of someone who holds that another being is a mediator between him and Allah, and that the mediator derives whatever it has from Allah is not incompatible with monotheism because .nothing contradicting the oneness of Allah can be witnessed in his belief

Of course, a belief that does not correspond with reality and existence is a false belief. But there is a difference between a belief that does not correspond with reality and

that which does not correspond with monotheism. For instance, the belief of a person who maintains that water is not wet is contrary to reality, but not contrary to .monotheism

The one who believes that water is not wet ought to be censured for asserting something that is contrary to reality, but cannot be accused of holding a belief contrary to monotheism, and hence cannot be censured for his belief. Therefore, this .can be the belief that was held by idolaters

Āyatullāh Zanjānī states that a belief that contradicts reality and is not permitted by .Allah denotes contradiction with monotheism

I feel that in the Holy Qur'an, Allah has censured the People of the Book [ahl al-kitāb](۱) for changing divine injunctions and attributing lies to Him, but He has not .driven them out of the realm of monotheism. Instead, He has called them liars

Chapter ۳: Idolatrous Beliefs with respect to the Resurrection

point

We will now deal with the question of whether idolaters believed in the Resurrection or not. Did they believe in the

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۱- Jews and Christians.

world after death or not? To answer this question, we will quote the responses of two .prominent scholars

Two theories about idolatrous beliefs with respect to the Resurrection

۱. The books of exegesis "Majma' al-Bayān" and "Kishāf" assert that polytheists .believed in the Resurrection

"Allah—there is no god except Him—the Living One, the All-sustainer. Neither

drowsiness befalls Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission? He knows that which is before them and that which is behind them, and they do not comprehend anything of His knowledge except what He wishes. His seat embraces the heavens and the earth, and He is not wearied by their preservation, and He is the All-exalted, the All-supreme."(۱)

Tabarsī thus interprets the above quoted verse, "This verse refutes intercession. That is to say, on the Day of Resurrection, no one will intercede with Allah on anyone's behalf save with His permission. This verse says so because polytheists used to believe that idols will intercede with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection. This verse repudiates their belief."(۲) Another verse similar to the above quoted one is:

"They worship besides Allah that which neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit, and they say, 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say, 'Will you inform Allah about something He does not know in the heavens and the earth?' Immaculate is He and exalted above [having] any partners that they ascribe [to Him]!"(۳)

Regarding this verse, Tabarsī

۱- Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵۵.
۲- Majma' al-Bayān, vol. ۲, p. ۳۶۲.
۳- Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۱۸.

has said, "Kishāf has interpreted this verse as denoting that idolaters used to believe in the Resurrection and that one of the ranks which idols will have on that day is the rank of intercessor."(۱)

۲. 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, in the twentieth volume of "Al-Mīzān", states that polytheists did not believe in the Resurrection.(۲) A summary of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī's assertion is that idolatrous beliefs regarding the Resurrection are divided into four kinds, all of

.which refute the principle of the Resurrection

The first group consisted of people who vehemently denied the Resurrection, and used to consider the existence of the hereafter as inconceivable. This can be inferred :from the following verse

The faithless say, 'Shall we show you a man who will inform you [that] when you have" been totally rent to pieces you will indeed have a new creation? He has fabricated a lie against Allah, or is there a madness in him? Rather those who do not believe in the (Hereafter languish in punishment and extreme error'."(٣

This verse indicates that idolaters used to believe that the Resurrection is an .impossible and inconceivable thing

The second group consisted of people who merely considered the existence of the Resurrection as unlikely and improbable, and thus used to refute its existence, but their denial was not at the same level as that of the first group. The following verse :can be adduced to refer to this group

Does he promise you that when you have died and become dust and bones you will" indeed be raised [from

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.Majma' al-Bayān, vol. ٥, p. ٩٨, exegesis of the above quoted verse -١
Al-Mīzān, vol. ٢٠, p. ١٥٩, exegesis of verses ١-٣ of Sūrat al-Naba', which states, -٢ "What is it about which they question each other? [Is it] about the great tiding, the one "?about which they differ
.Sūrat Saba' ٣٤:٧-٨ -٣

the dead]? Far-fetched, far-fetched is what you are promised! There is nothing but the life of this world: we live and we die, and we shall not be resurrected. He is just a (man who has fabricated a lie against Allah, and we will not believe in him."(١

The third group consists of people who held doubts and misgivings with respect to the

Resurrection and thus denied its existence. The following verse can be adduced to :refer to this group

Do they comprehend the knowledge of the Hereafter? No, they are in doubt about it.“ (Rather, they are blind to it.”(٢

The fourth group consists of people who in their hearts believed in the Resurrection, but used to deny it out of obstinacy and stubbornness, in the same way that they used .to deny monotheism and prophethood and other subsidiary tenets of religion

:The following verse can be adduced to refer to this group

(Rather they persist in defiance and aversion.”(٣“

We concur with ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī, the author of “Al-Mīzān”, that polytheists used to deny the existence of the Hereafter, but do not agree with his dividing them into groups and we have comprehensively refuted his reasons in the exegesis of Sūrat al-Naba’. Those interested can refer to it.

”Response from “Majma‘ al-Bayān

Now, the question that arises is that how does “Majma‘ al-Bayān”, which asserts that idolaters used to believe in the existence of the Resurrection, respond to ‘Allāmah ?Tabātabā’ī’s assertion that they never believed in the Hereafter

Majma‘ al-Bayān’s response can be inferred from the assertion of ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī in

p: ٨٩

.Sūrat al-Mu’minūn ٢٣:٣٥-٣٨ -١

.Sūrat al-Naml ٢٧:۶۶ -٢

.Sūrat al-Mulk ۶٧:٢١ -٣

Al-Mīzān”, because according to “Al-Mīzān”, the verse “These are our intercessors“ with Allah” denotes worldly, not eschatological, intercession. Intercession in this verse

.means repelling problems and calamities, as well as bringing good to hand

Idolaters believed that idols were placed in the series of causes and effects and they were effective in cosmic affairs, and could alleviate the problems facing polytheists. In other words, idols could interfere in the will of Allah and influence causes according to their wishes. Therefore, mediation and intercession were related to worldly affairs, not eschatological ones, and this was the meaning of intercession in all Qur'anic verses in which it was mentioned, having no connection whatsoever with .eschatological intercession

In my opinion, we can strike a compromise between the assertions of "Majma' al-Bayān" and "Al-Mīzān" by saying that idolaters used to believe that there is no resurrection, and supposing the Resurrection occurs, idols will solve their problems. The verse "These are our intercessors with Allah" means eschatological intercession, but on the assumption that it occurs; then, idols will intercede with Allah on their :behalf. The following verse can be adduced to prove this assertion

And if We let him have a taste of Our mercy after distress has befallen him, he will" surely say, 'This is my due! I do not think the Hour will ever set in, and in case I am (returned to my Lord, I will indeed have the best [reward] with Him'."(١

Idolaters and denial of the Resurrection

point

Now, we will comprehensively quote verses which are related to idolaters' denial

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.Sūrat Fussilat ۴١:۵٠ -١

.of the Resurrection. Some are explicit while others are implicit

:First verse

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and"

then settled on the Throne, directing the command. There is no intercessor, except by His leave. That is Allah, your Lord! So worship Him. Will you not then take admonition? To Him will be the return of you all—[that is] Allah's true promise. Indeed, He originates the creation, then He will bring it back so that He may reward, those who have faith and do righteous deeds, with justice. As for the faithless, they shall have boiling water for drink, and a painful punishment because of what they used to (defy."(١)

From beginning to end, this verse pertains to polytheists. It can be inferred from "To Him will be the return of you all" that the ones addressed did not believe that they would be returned to Allah. "Indeed, He originates the creation" also demonstrates .that Allah is capable of easily raising the dead to life

:Second verse

Say, 'Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah and not ascribe any partner" (to Him. To Him do I summon [all mankind] and to Him will be my return'."(٢)

This verse denotes that polytheists did not believe in the Hereafter. The Noble Prophet (s) was charged with inviting the people addressed to believe in monotheism and the Resurrection, which is returning to Allah after death. This indicates that the people addressed, the polytheists, did not believe in either monotheism or the

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.Sūrat Yūnus ١٠:٣-۴ -١
.Sūrat al-Ra'd ١٣:٣۶ -٢

Resurrection. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (s) was charged with .teaching them these two beliefs

It is necessary to mention that almost all the prophets ('a) were confronted with polytheists. According to Fakhr Rāzī, "The earliest of prophets who was confronted with idolaters was Noah ('a)."(١) And all the prophets ('a) were charged with inviting people to monotheism. Perhaps no prophet ('a) can be found who was not faced with

.idolaters

:Third verse

Rather, they say just like what the ancients said. They said, 'What, when we are dead" and become dust and bones, shall we be resurrected? Certainly, we and our fathers (were promised this before. [But] these are nothing but myths of the ancients'."(٢

Without the least doubt, the verses before and after the above quoted verses refer to idolaters. The pronoun 'they' in the above quoted verse also refers to polytheists. Therefore, [it can be deduced that] idolaters used to deny the Hereafter and used to consider it as nothing but a myth. This verse explicitly denotes that idolaters used to .deny the Resurrection

:Fourth verse

And do not invoke another god besides Allah; there is no god except Him, Everything" is to perish except His face. All judgment belongs to Him, and to Him you will be (brought back."(٣

This verse denotes, or at least alludes to, the lack of belief in the Resurrection among polytheists. Allah advises and invites them to believe in monotheism and the .Resurrection

:Fifth verse

The life of this world is nothing but diversion and play, but the abode"

Tafsīr Kabīr, vol. ١, p. ١١, exegesis of verse ٥ of Sūrat al-Fātihah, which states, "You -١ ".[alone] do we worship, and to You [alone] do we turn for help

.Sūrat al-Mu'minūn ٢٣:٨١-٨٣ -٢

.Sūrat al-Qasas ٢٨:٨٨ -٣

(of the Hereafter is indeed Life, had they known."(١

The above quoted verse has restricted real life to the life of the Hereafter, and adds that idolaters need to know this (had they known). It can be deduced from this statement that polytheists did not have awareness and belief in the life of the Hereafter.

Sixth verse:

"And say, 'This is nothing but plain magic!' 'What! When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we be resurrected? And our fathers too?!' Say, 'Yes! And you will be utterly humble.' It will be only a single shout and, behold, they will look on, and say, 'Woe to us! This is the Day of Retribution!' 'This is the Day of Judgment that they used to deny!' 'Muster the wrongdoers and their mates(٢) and what they used to worship besides Allah, and show them the way to Hell! [But first] stop them! For they must be questioned.' 'Why is it that you do not support(٣) one another [today]?'"(٤)

It is very clear that these verses explicitly indicate that idolaters used to deny the existence of the Resurrection.

Seventh verse:

"Say, 'I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is One God. So be steadfast toward Him and plead to Him for forgiveness.' And woe to the polytheists—those who do not pay the zakāt and disbelieve in the Hereafter."(٥)

The above quoted verse explicitly mentions two idolatrous beliefs; not paying zakāt and denying the Hereafter.

Eighth verse:

point

"Look! They are indeed in doubt about

.Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt ۲۹:۶۴ -۱
.’Or ‘their kind,’ or ‘their counterparts -۲
.’Or ‘help -۳
.Sūrat al-Sāffāt ۳۷:۱۵-۲۵ -۴
.Sūrat Fussilat ۴۱:۶-۷ -۵

(the encounter with their Lord! Look! He indeed comprehends all things!”(۱

The pronoun ‘they’ refers to polytheists. The lack of belief includes complete denial of .the Resurrection as well as holding doubts and misgivings with respect to it

Obviating a doubt

Some verses explicitly indicate that idolaters used to vehemently refute the Resurrection and consider it a myth but this verse indicates that they were [merely] in doubt with respect to the Resurrection. This shows that idolaters held varying degrees of disbelief in the Resurrection; some of them denied its existence altogether .while others merely doubted its existence

:Ninth verse

He has prescribed for you the religion which He had enjoined upon Noah and which“ We have [also] revealed to you, and which We had enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus, declaring, ‘Maintain the religion, and do not be divided in it.’ Hard on the polytheists is that to which you summon them. Allah chooses for it(۲) whomever He (wishes and He guides to it(۳) whoever returns penitently.”(۴

Hard on the polytheists is that to which you summon them.” What is it that the Noble“ Prophet (s) used to summon idolaters to? The Noble Prophet (s) used to summon polytheists to belief in monotheism and the Resurrection, and accepting both of these beliefs was hard on them. At the beginning of the above quoted verse, the Noble Prophet (s) has been told that his religion is the same as that which had been enjoined on preceding prophets (‘a), and it has been clearly demonstrated in a lot of Qur’anic

.Sūrat Fussilat ۴۱:۵۴ -۱

.’Or ‘for Himself -۲

.’Or ‘to Himself -۳

.Sūrat al-Shawrā ۴۲:۱۳ -۴

verses that preceding prophets (‘a) used to summon people to believe in the Resurrection. Likewise, the Noble Prophet (s) had been charged with summoning :people to believe in the Hereafter, as the following verse indicates

Thus, have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur’an that you may warn [the people of]“ the Mother of the Towns(۱) and those around it, and warn [them] of the Day of Gathering, in which there is no doubt, [whereupon] a part [of mankind] will be in (Paradise and a part will be in the Blaze.”(۲

The Day of Gathering’ means the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, the Noble Prophet‘ (s) was charged with warning the people about the Resurrection and making them .believe in it

:Tenth verse

He draws comparisons for Us, and forgets his own creation. He says, ‘Who shall“ revive the bones when they have decayed?’ Say, ‘He shall revive them who produced (them the first time, and He has knowledge of all creation’.”(۳

Even if there are differences of opinion regarding who uttered these words, there is still consensus that he was an idolater. This does not express the words of one man, .but the thoughts of all polytheists

:Eleventh verse

They will be] in gardens, questioning concerning the guilty: ‘What drew you into]“ Hell?’ They will answer, ‘We were not among those who prayed,(۴) nor did we feed the poor. We used to gossip along with the gossipers, and we used to deny the Day of (Retribution,(۵) until death came to us’.”(۶

Mujrimīn' (the guilty) either means idolaters alone or idolaters'

۱- That is, the city of Mecca.

۲- Sūrat al-Shawrā ۴۲:۷.

۳- Sūrat Yā Sīn ۳۶:۷۸-۷۹.

۴- Or 'We were not among followers of the leaders (or forerunners, mentioned in ۵۶:۱۰)

۵- Or 'the Day of Judgment.'

۶- Sūrat al-Muddaththir ۷۴:۴۰-۴۷.

and other groups of people. The guilty say one of the reasons why they were cast into Hell is that they did not believe in the Day of Retribution [or Resurrection].

Twelfth verse:

"The faithless say, 'Shall we show you a man who will inform you [that] when you have been totally rent to pieces you will indeed have a new creation? He has fabricated a lie against Allah, or is there a madness in him?' Rather those who do not believe in the Hereafter languish in punishment and extreme error."(۱)

The faithless are either idolaters only, or idolaters and other groups of people. For more proof, readers can also refer to verses ۵۱-۵۲ of Sūrat Yā Sīn, and verses ۷ and ۴۴ of Sūrat al-Zumar, and verses ۵۰-۶۰ of Sūrat al-Sāffāt.

Chapter ۴: Idolatrous Religious Rites

point

Before commencing the discussion, it is necessary to mention that polytheists used to perform special rituals or idolatrous religious rites with the intention of worshipping idols and manifesting their love for them. Among the many proofs of this discussion is the following verse:

"Say, 'Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a straight path, the upright religion, the

creed of Abraham, a hanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.’ Say, ‘Indeed, my prayer and my worship, my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. He has no partner, and this [creed] I have been commanded [to follow], and I am the first of those who submit [to Allah].’ Say, ‘Shall I

۱- ۳۴:۷ Sūrat Saba’.

seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things?’ No soul does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another’s burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which you used to differ.”(۱)

It can be gathered from the above quoted verses that Abraham (‘a) was not one of the polytheists; “…Abraham, a hanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.” The Noble Prophet (s) is being ordered to follow in the footsteps of Abraham (‘a), a hanīf, and to perform all religious rites, whether they are prayers or the hajj, for the sake of Allah, as well as to live and die for Him. This shows that the opposing camp, the polytheists, never used to perform their religious rites for Allah the One God, but for idols.

It seems that the outstanding difference between the Noble Prophet (s) and idolaters was that the Noble Prophet (s) used to perform his acts of worship for the sake of Allah while polytheists used to perform their rites for idols.

Idolatrous rites

point

We will hereunder cite examples of polytheistic rites:

a) Slaughtering animals in the name of idols

Idolaters used to slaughter their animals in the name of an idol and perhaps one of the reasons why Islam has ordered that it is obligatory to mention the name of Allah

at the time of slaughtering animals is to counter wrong idolatrous rites. It is clear that idolaters used to slaughter animals in the name of idols, but not clear

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.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۶۱-۱۶۴ -۱

which idol was invoked at the time of slaughtering; whether it was the name of the greatest idol, or the name of the clan idol, or the local idol.

One of the verses which denote that polytheists used to slaughter animals in the name of idols is:

۱. "You are prohibited carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been offered to other than Allah, and the animal strangled or beaten to death, and that which dies by falling or is gored to death, and that which is mangled by a beast of prey barring that which you may purify(۱)—and what is sacrificed on stone alters [to idols], and that you should divide by raffling with arrows. All that is transgression."(۲)

This verse enumerates forbidden foods. One of the foods whose eating is forbidden is "...what has been offered to other than Allah". This means an animal slaughtered in the name of other than Allah, in the name of an idol.

۲. "And they say, 'These cattle and tillage are a taboo: none may eat them except whom we please,' so they maintain, and there are cattle whose backs are forbidden and cattle over which they do not mention Allah's name, fabricating a lie against Him. Soon He will requite them for what they used to fabricate."(۳)

It can be deduced from the above quoted verse that idolaters never used to slaughter four legged animals in the name of Allah, but in the name of idols.

b) Cutting and/or slitting the ears of animals

One of the idolatrous beliefs was cleaving and/ or

.That is, by duly slaughtering the animal wounded by the beast of prey -۱

.Sūrat al-Mā’idah ۵:۳ -۲

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۱۳۸ -۳

:slitting the ears of animals. The following verse proves this

They invoke none but females(۱) besides Him, and invoke none but a froward Satan,“ whom Allah has cursed, and who said, ‘I will surely take of Your servants a settled share, and I will lead them astray and give them [false] hopes, and prompt them to slit (the ears of cattle’.”(۲

Whoever takes Satan as a guardian instead of Allah has certainly incurred a manifest“ (loss.”(۳

In this verse, Satan threatens to deprave and corrupt the children of Adam (i.e. .mankind) by making them cut and/or slit the ears of animals

c) Slaughtering animals with the intention of gaining proximity to idols

One of the special rituals of idolaters was slaughtering animals with the intention of :gaining proximity to idols. This can be inferred from the following verse

You are prohibited carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been offered to“ other than Allah, and the animal strangled or beaten to death, and that which dies by falling or is gored to death, and that which is mangled by a beast of prey barring that which you may purify(۴)—and what is sacrificed on stone alters [to idols], and that you (should divide by raffling with arrows. All that is transgression.”(۵

”[And what is sacrificed on stone alters [to idols“

has been interpreted in two ways: ۱) an animal that has been slaughtered in the name of an idol; and ۲) an animal that has been slaughtered with the intention of gaining .proximity with an idol

Majma‘ al-Bayān” has explained that after slaughtering an animal, idolaters used“

Most of the idols and deities worshiped by Arab pagans had female names, e.g. Lāt, -١ .Manāt, Nā'ilah etc

This refers to the pagan practice of slitting the ears of camels as a sign of their -٢ .dedication to pagan deities

.Sūrat al-Nisā' ۴:۱۱۹ -٣

.That is, by duly slaughtering the animal wounded by the beast of prey -۴

.Sūrat al-Mā'idah ۵:٣ -۵

to smear its blood on idols with the intention of consecrating the sacrificed animal to .idols

d) Animals whose use was forbidden

Polytheists used to believe that using certain animals in particular conditions was :forbidden for some or all people. The following verse proves this assertion

Allah has not prescribed any such thing as Bahīrah, Sā'ibah, Wasīlah, or Hām;(١) but" those who are faithless fabricate lies against Allah, and most of them do not apply (reason."(٢

:Bahīrah' has been construed in a number of ways'

A camel which had reproduced five times; they slit its ears and refrained from killing .١ and mounting it and never stopped it from drinking water and pasturing on meadows .if it gave birth to a male on its fifth reproduction

A camel which had reproduced five times; they slaughtered it and both men and .٢ women would partake of its meat if it gave birth to a male on its fifth reproduction, and slit its ears and call it Bahīrah if it gave birth to a female. Mounting it was forbidden and women were not allowed to drink its milk and derive any other benefit from it, but men were allowed to derive benefit from it. Both men and women would .partake of its meat when it died. Bahīrah means to be slit or ripped or torn

:Sā’ibah’ too has been interpreted in a number of ways‘

An animal which they used to liberate on account of having made a solemn vow .۱ [nadhr] and never again would they derive any benefit from it. They never used

p: ۱۰۰

The pre-Islamic Arabs used these terms for individual camels and sheep, which - ۱ were subject to such practices as the slitting of ears, the forbidding of their use for burden, their dedication to idols, and restriction of their flesh to males. The commentators give different descriptions of these primitive customs and their .significance, reflecting probably their varying practice among pre-Islamic Arabs

.Sūrat al-Mā’idah ۵:۱۰۳ -۲

.to restrain it from drinking water and pasturing on meadows

An animal which was freed for the sake of idols. Sā’ibah is a verbal noun or gerund .۲ .which denotes being liberated and set free

:Wasīlah’ has also been construed in a number of ways‘

It has been transmitted from Imām al-Sādiq (‘a) that during the Age of Ignorance, a .۱ camel would be named Wasīlah if it reproduced twins, and killing it as well as eating its .[meat were forbidden. [Kanz al-Daqā’iq

If a sheep reproduced a female, it would belong to its owner and if it reproduced a .۲ male, it would be sacrificed for idols. If it reproduced both a male and a female, they .used to say that a brother has been connected to its sister and would forgo killing it

Hām: If ten young were reproduced from the loins of a male camel, they used to forbid mounting it and used to set it free to graze on meadows and drink water, and (used to say that the back (i.e. loins) of that animal has been closed.(۱

In the above quoted verse, Allah has refuted all these idolatrous prohibitions and has stated that He has not prescribed such kinds of prohibitions, and that the faithless

.have fabricated lies against Him

It is necessary to mention that verses ١٣٨ and ١٣٩ of Sūrat al-An‘ām implicitly interpret .verse ١٠٣ of Sūrat al-Mā’idah

And they say, ‘These cattle and tillage are a taboo: none may eat them except whom“ we please,’ so they maintain, and there

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Tafsīr ‘Illīyyīn, p. ١٢۴, exegesis of the above quoted verse, as quoted from “Majma‘ -١ .”al-Bayān

are cattle whose backs are forbidden and cattle over which they do not mention Allah’s Name, fabricating a lie against Him. Soon He will requite them for what they used to fabricate. And they say, ‘That which is in the bellies of these cattle is exclusively for our males and forbidden to our wives. But if it be still-born, they will all share it.’ Soon, He will requite them for their allegations. Indeed, He is All-wise, All-(knowing.”(١

e) Apportioning yield from animal and crop husbandry between Allah and idols

:The following Qur’anic verse proves this matter

They dedicate to Allah out of what He has created of the crops and cattle a portion,“ and they say, ‘This is for Allah,’ so do they maintain, ‘and this is for our partners.’ But what is for their partners does not reach Allah, and what is for Allah reaches their (partners. Evil is the judgment that they make.”(٢

:This verse has been interpreted in a number of ways

Idolaters used to dedicate a part of their yield from animal and crop husbandry to .١ Allah and another portion to their idols. If the yield dedicated to Allah was good while the yield dedicated to idols was poor, they would use the yield designated to Allah for ”.their idols, and would say, “Allah is needless

If the yield from the animals and crops they had designated to their idols was good .٢ and the yield from animals and crops dedicated to Allah was poor, they would give to idols the share dedicated to them and to Allah the share dedicated to

p: ١٠٢

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:١٣٨-١٣٩ -١
.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:١٣۶ -٢

.Him, and would say that Allah was needless

In short, they seemed to always favor the idols, unless the yield from both] [.apportionments was equal

f) Killing children on account of fear of poverty

It can be gathered from Qur'anic verses that one of the very indecent or unbecoming idolatrous customs was killing their children due to fear of hunger and the privations :of poverty. The following verse proves this assertion

Say, 'Come, I will recount what your Lord has forbidden you from. That you shall" .١ not ascribe any partners to Him, and you shall be good to your parents, you shall not (kill your children due to penury—We will provide for you and for them'."(١

Do not kill your children for the fear of penury: We will provide for them and for you." .٢ (Killing them is indeed a great iniquity."(٢

g) Ignominy for having daughters and burying female newborns alive

From a historical point of view, it is clear that one of the greatly wrong and villainous idolatrous beliefs was feeling ashamed of having female children. They used to bury their female children alive as a result of the shame they felt. Some Qur'anic verses, .like the one quoted hereunder, prove the existence of this evil belief

When one of them is brought the news of a female [newborn], his face becomes" darkened and he chokes with suppressed agony. He hides from the people out of

distress at the news he has been brought: Shall he retain it in humiliation, or bury it in the ground!(۳) Look! Evil is the judgment that they make.(۴) When one of them is brought the news

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۱- Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۱۵۱.

۲- Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ۱۷:۳۱.

۳- This refers to the practice of pre-Islamic Arabs of burying their newborn daughters alive.

۴- Sūrat al-Nahl ۱۶:۵۸-۵۹.

of what he ascribes to the All-beneficent, his face becomes darkened(۱) and he chokes with suppressed agony, [and says] ‘What! One who is brought up amid ornaments and is inconspicuous in contests?’”(۲)

h) Worshipping and supplicating idols

point

One of the idolatrous customs and rites was worshipping, prostrating before and entreating idols. It is necessary to mention that supplicating idols denotes the same as worshipping them.

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of worship before beginning this discussion; we hold that worship denotes absolute humility and abjection, and no additional determining factor is considered. This viewpoint is contrary to what others hold that worship means utmost abjection, humility and submission vis-à-vis another [being], and do not consider any kind of humility as worship. The truth of the matter will be clarified by adducing Qur’anic verses and hadīths in future discussions.

There are many Qur’anic verses in this regard; mentioning a few examples will suffice to prove this assertion:

First verse:

Look! [Only] exclusive faith is worthy of Allah, and those who take guardians besides“ Him [claiming,] ‘We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah.’ Allah will indeed judge between them concerning that about which they differ. Indeed, Allah (does not guide someone who is a liar and an ingrate.”(٣

Idolaters admitted that they used to worship idols with the intention that they may .intercede on their behalf with Allah

:Second verse

Say, ‘O people! If you are in doubt about my religion, then [know that] I do not“ ,worship those whom you worship besides Allah. Rather, I worship only Allah

p: ١٠۴

.That is, when he is brought the news of the birth of a daughter -١

.Sūrat al-Zukhruf ۴٣:١٧ -٢

.Sūrat al-Zumar ٣٩:٣ -٣

who causes to die, and I have been commanded to be among the faithful, and told: ‘Dedicate yourself to the religion, as a hanīf, and never be one of the polytheists. Never invoke besides Allah that which neither benefits you nor can do you any harm; (for if you do so, then you will indeed be among the wrongdoers’.”(١

It is clear that ‘O people!’ refers to polytheists, because verse ١٠۴ continues to say, “... if you are in doubt about my religion, then [know that] I do not worship those whom you worship besides Allah.” and verse ١٠۵ says, “...and never be one of the ”.polytheists

Verse ١٠۴ explicitly states that idolaters used to worship idols besides Allah. Verse ١٠۶ expresses it in another way, meaning that invoking idols is the same as worshiping them, so

Dedicate yourself to the religion as a hanīf, and never be one of the polytheists.“ Never invoke besides Allah that which neither benefits you nor can do you any harm;

".for if you do so, then you will indeed be among the wrongdoers

:Third verse

Say, 'O faithless ones! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I" worship; nor will I worship what you have worshipped nor will you worship what I (worship. To you your religion and to me my religion'."(۲)

.This Sūrat very explicitly spells out that idolaters used to worship idols

:Fourth verse

They invoke none but females(۳) besides Him, and invoke none but a rebellious" (Satan, whom Allah has cursed."(۴)

The pronoun 'they' in the

p: ۱۰۵

۱- Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۱۰۴-۱۰۶.
۲- Sūrat al-Kāfirūn ۱۰۹:۱-۶.
۳- Most of the idols and deities worshipped by Arab pagans had female names, e.g., Lāt, Manāt, 'Uzzā, Nā'ilah, etc.
۴- Sūrat al-Nisā' ۴:۱۱۷-۱۱۸.

verse

"They invoke none but females besides Him"

:refers to idolaters. This verse has been interpreted in three ways

۱. 'Females' refers to idols, and the reason for this kind of expression is that idolaters used to give female names to their idols.

۲. 'Females' refers to angels, because idolaters used to worship angels under the impression that they were Allah's daughters.

Females' means receptivity, passivity and the state of being affected and ineffective. This denotation includes women too. Allah seems to say that their objects of worship are not capable of doing anything, are passive or ineffective, whereas an object of worship ought to be active and capable of doing something. [Kanz al-Daqā'iq, Tafsīr al-Mīzān].

In "Majma' al-Bayān", the verse 'They invoke' in both the verses "They invoke none but females besides Him, and invoke none but a rebellious Satan" has been construed to mean worship, they worship none but females and a rebellious Satan. This means that in reality, worshipping idols is tantamount to worshiping Satan because it is he who orders and incites man to worship idols.

But in "Tafsīr al-Mīzān", the first 'invoke' in the verse "They invoke none but females besides Him" has been construed to mean worship because idolaters used to worship idols asking them to alleviate their problems and needs; and the second 'invoke' in "... and invoke none but a rebellious Satan" has been interpreted to mean obey and follow.

It appears that "Majma' al-Bayān" is right in interpreting both verses as worship, because worship denotes obedience, as

we will later prove that there is no distinction between these two terms, and we will also critique "Al-Mīzān" in order to make this issue clearer.

Chapter ۵: The Social Culture of Idolaters

Our aim in this discourse is to clarify the level of knowledge of idolaters.

According to historical accounts, idolaters could neither read nor write, and very few people among them were literate. Tabarī says, "When the Noble Prophet (s) was appointed to the prophetic mission, very few people in Mecca and Medina could [read and] write. The Noble Prophet (s) made strenuous efforts to teach them [reading and] writing until they learnt."(۱)

But proving and/or negating this cannot be demonstrated by adducing Qur'anic :verses. However, consider the following verse

It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to" (recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom."(۲

The word 'ummīyyīn' [the unlettered people] in the above quoted verse has been :interpreted in a number of ways

It is [possibly] a plural of 'ummī', which means an ignorant and uneducated person. .۱ According to this possibility, the verse denotes that idolaters were illiterate and unlearned. But the invalidity [or falsity] of this possibility will be made clear by hadīths .which will be recounted

.It means people who did not possess a Divine or heavenly book .۲

Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, the author of "Tafsīr al-Mīzān", prefers the first possibility and considers other possibilities as having signs of alteration. Of course, he has added that the Noble Prophet (s) was

p: ۱۰۷

.Makātīb al-Rasūl, p. ۳۹۴; Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, vol. ۴, p. ۳۲۸ -۱
.Sūrat al-Jumu'ah ۶۲:۲ -۲

raised to the prophetic mission among illiterate people, and he himself was one of (them too, but this does not mean that he was sent only to them, but to all mankind.(۱

Suyūtī too in "Tafsīr Jalālīn" has said something similar to what 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī ."has said in "Tafsīr al-Mīzān

But in "Tafsīr Qurtubī", it has been transmitted from Ibn 'Abbās that 'ummīyyīn' means all Arabs, whether they are literate or illiterate, and that in the above quoted verse, it means that Arabs did not have a Divine or heavenly book, and that no prophet had (ever been raised among them.(۲

This same interpretation has been recounted from Imām al-Sādiq ('a). Mu'āwiyah ibn 'Ammār says, "In regard to the above-mentioned verse, Imām al-Sādiq ('a) stated, 'Arabs knew how to read and write, but did not have a heavenly book and no prophet had been sent to them. It is for this reason that they are called ummīyyīn.'(۳) It can be asserted that idolaters were literate because the word of Imām al-Sādiq ('a) is (decisive speech [or clear judgment]."(۴

Chapter ۶: Idolatry is an Illogical Creed

point

Honestly speaking, what rational or narrated proof did idolaters have for their creed? It can be gathered from Qur'anic verses that they did not have any proof for their beliefs, whether in the realm of ideology or in the domain of rituals. In brief, it can be said that idolatry is a man-made religion which is based on conjecture and delusion and is not founded on any heavenly book and/or rational proof. We

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۱- Al-Mīzān, vol. ۱۹, p. ۲۶۴.

۲- Tafsīr Qurtubī, vol. ۱۸, p. ۹۱.

۳- Bihār al-Anwār, vol. ۹, p. ۲۴۳, as recounted from Tafsīr Qummī; Burhān, vol. ۵, p. ۳۳۲; Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn, vol. ۵, p. ۳۲۲.

۴- For more information see Tafsīr Ibn kathīr, vol. ۱, p. ۱۲۱; Bihār al-Anwār, vol. ۱۶, p. ۱۳۲; Al-Mīzān, vol. ۱۹, p. ۲۶۴.

will adduce certain Qur'anic verses in order to clarify this claim:

First verse:

"How could I fear what you ascribe [to Him] as [His] partners, when you do not fear ascribing to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority to you? So [tell me,] which of the two sides has a greater right to safety, if you know."(۱)

Idolaters used to intimidate prophets ('a) saying that idols would most likely harm

.them and be wrathful towards them

:Second verse

They make the jinn partners of Allah, though He has created them, and carve out“ sons and daughters for Him, without any knowledge. Immaculate is He and exalted (above what they allege [concerning Him]!”(٢

It can easily be inferred from this verse that idolatrous beliefs were not based on any .certain knowledge but were merely founded on a series of illusions and fantasies

:Third verse

They dedicate to Allah out of what He has created of the crops and cattle a portion,“ and say, ‘This is for Allah.’ So, do they maintain, and this is for our partners. But what is for their partners does not reach Allah, and what is for Allah reaches their partners. (Evil is the judgment that they make.”(٣

Allah mentions one of the idolatrous rituals, which is apportioning their yield from animal and crop husbandry between Allah and idols, and states that this belief was based on the delusions and fantasies of idolaters and that it was a belief devoid of any .convincing proof

:Fourth verse

That is how to most of the polytheists is presented as“

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:٨١ -١

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:١٠٠ -٢

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:١٣۶ -٣

decorous the slaying of their children by those whom they ascribe as partners [to Allah], and confound their religion for them. Had Allah wished, they would not have (done it. So, leave them with what they fabricate.”(١

.This verse indicates that idolatrous deeds were delusory and devoid of any proof

:Fifth verse

And they say, 'These cattle and tillage are a taboo: none may eat them except whom" we please,' So, they maintain, and there are cattle whose backs are forbidden and cattle over which they do not mention Allah's Name, fabricating a lie against Him. (Soon, He will require them for what they used to fabricate."(٢

The above quoted verse shows that such kinds of practices were utter lies which .idolaters had concocted against Allah

:Sixth verse

And they say, 'That which is in the bellies of these cattle is exclusively for our males" and forbidden to our wives. But if it is still-born, they will share it.' Soon, He will requite (them for their allegations. Indeed, He is All-wise, All-knowing."(٣

This verse also indicates that such practices were a result of the fantasies and .delusions of idolaters, and not based on any authoritative proof

:Seventh verse

They are certainly losers who slay their children foolishly without knowledge, and" forbid what Allah has provided them, fabricating a lie against Allah. Certainly, they (have gone astray and are not guided."(۴

:Eighth verse

Eight mates: two of sheep, and two of goats. Say, 'Is it the two males that He has" forbidden, or the two females, or what is contained in the wombs of the two

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.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۳۸ -۱

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۳۸ -۲

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۱۳۹ -۳

.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۱۴۰ -۴

females? Inform me with knowledge, should you be truthful.’ And two of camels and two of oxen. Say, ‘Is it the two males that He has forbidden or the two females, or what is contained in the wombs of the two females? Were you witnesses when Allah enjoined this upon you?’ So who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah to mislead the people without any knowledge? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot.”(۱)

This verse, especially the part which says, “Were you witnesses when Allah enjoined this upon you? So, who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah to mislead the people without any knowledge”, also clearly proves that idolatrous practices were not based on any kind of authoritative proof.

:Ninth verse

“The polytheists will say, ‘Had Allah wished, we would not have ascribed any partner [to Him], nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.’ Those who were before them had denied(۲) likewise until they tasted Our punishment. Say, ‘Do you have any [revealed] knowledge that you can produce before us? You follow nothing but conjectures, and you do nothing but surmise.’ Say, ‘To Allah belongs the conclusive argument. Had He wished, He would have surely guided you all.’ Say, ‘Bring your witnesses who may testify that Allah has forbidden this.’ So, if they testify, do not testify with them, and do not follow the desires of those who deny Our signs, and those who do not believe in the

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.Sūrat al-An‘ām ۶:۱۴۳-۱۴۴ -۱

Or ‘those who were before them had lied likewise’, in accordance with an alternate -۲ reading. (See al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, and al-Ṭabrisī).

Hereafter and equate [others] with their Lord.”(۱)

Sections of these verses hint at the absurdity and preposterousness of idolatrous :beliefs

١. "Say, 'Do you have any [revealed] knowledge that you can produce before us?'"

٢. "You follow nothing but conjectures."

٣. "And you do nothing but surmise."

۴. "To Allah belongs the conclusive argument."

۵. "Bring your witnesses who may testify that Allah has forbidden this..."

Note: Some people have sought to claim that idolatry was a religion of fatalism and determinism by adducing verse ١۴٨, but this claim is not correct because these verses do not prove their claim. However, the outward meaning of the verse is that idolaters used to claim that they had Divine proof to ascertain their creed. Allah has nullified this .claim

:Tenth verse

"Say, 'Tell me about what you invoke besides Allah. Show me what [part] of the earth they have created. Do they have any share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture [revealed] before this, or some vestige of [Divine] knowledge, should you be truthful?'" (٢)

:Eleventh verse

"They worship besides Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and of which they have no knowledge. And the wrongdoers shall have no help." (٣)

:Twelfth verse

"Whoever invokes besides Allah another god of which he has no proof, his reckoning will indeed rest with his Lord. Indeed, the faithless will not be felicitous." (۴)

:Thirteenth verse

They say, 'Had the All-beneficent wished, we would not have worshipped.'(۵) They do" not have any knowledge of that, and they do nothing but surmise. Did We give them a Book before this, so that

p: ۱۱۲

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱ -۱

.Sūrat al-Ahqāf ۴۶:۴ -۲

.Sūrat al-Hajj ۲۲:۷۱ -۳

.Sūrat al-Mu'minūn ۲۳:۱۱۷ -۴

.That is, the gods worshipped by the polytheists -۵

they are holding fast to it? Rather, they say, 'We found our fathers following a creed, and we are indeed guided in their footsteps.' And so it has been that We did not send any warner to a town before you, without its affluent ones saying, 'We found our fathers following a creed and we are indeed following in their footsteps.' He would say, 'What! Even if I bring you a better guidance than what you found your fathers (following?!' They would say, 'We indeed disbelieve in what you are sent with'."(۱

It can be deduced from this verse that polytheists had blindly followed their .forefathers and adopted idolatry and had no logical proof for their creed

:Fourteenth verse

Say, 'My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, the outward among them and the" inward ones, and sin and undue aggression, and that you should ascribe to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you should attribute (to Allah what you do not know'."(۲

:Fifteenth verse

He said, 'There has become due against you a punishment and wrath from your Lord." Do you dispute with me regarding names which you have named—you and your fathers—for which Allah has not sent down any authority? So wait! I too am waiting (along with you'."(۳

?Is idolatry a reality or a delusion

point

It has become clear from previous discussions that idolatry is nothing but a series of delusions, and that it is not based on any rational and narrated proof. The Holy Qur'an has sometimes called idolatry 'fantasies' [za'm] and has at times called

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١- Sūrat al-Zukhruf ۴٣:٢٠-٢۴.
٢- Sūrat al-A'rāf ٧:٣٣.
٣- Sūrat al-A'rāf ٧:٧١.

:it 'conjecture' [zann]. To illustrate this, we will quote a number of verses

:First verse

"On the Day when We will gather them all together, We shall say to those who ascribed partners [to Allah], 'Where are your partners that you used to claim?' Then their only excuse will be to say, 'By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists.' Look, how they forswear themselves, and what they used to fabricate has forsaken them!"(١)

:Second verse

"The Day He will call out to them and say, 'Where are my partners that you used to claim?'"(٢)

:Third verse

"Most of them just follow conjecture; indeed, conjecture is no substitute for the truth. Indeed, Allah knows best what they do."(٣)

Verses preceding this verse concern polytheists, to whom refers the pronoun 'most of them' in the above quoted verse.

:Fourth verse

Look! To Allah indeed belongs whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth.“ And what do they pursue who invoke partners besides Allah? They merely follow conjectures and they just make surmises.”(۴)

There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an on this subject, but these few verses suffice to illustrate the delusory nature of idolatry.

Yes, a person who is entangled in delusions believes a lot of his fantasies; he imagines that Allah is like His creatures, and conjectures that Allah has off-springs, a spouse and limbs like the creatures He has created. A person who is deluded ought to be awakened so that he may conceive reality. It is for this reason that when idolaters were faced with danger and destruction, they

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۱- ۶:۲۲-۲۴ Sūrat al-An‘ām.

۲- ۲۸:۶۲ Sūrat al-Qasas.

۳- ۱۰:۳۶ Sūrat Yūnus.

۴- ۱۰:۶۶ Sūrat Yūnus.

used to awaken from their illusions and turn to their primordial natures.

The monotheism of polytheists in crises

point

Polytheists used to live in fantasy, and only used to turn to their natural inclinations when critical moments arose and used to conceive that only Allah is effective and that none besides Him is capable of doing anything. Crises used to awaken them from their slumber, but unfortunately, they used to get entangled in their delusions once critical circumstances were gotten rid of and life once more came back to normal. There are a number of verses in the Holy Qur’an which illustrate this issue:

:First verse

Say, 'Tell me, should Allah's punishment overtake you, or should the Hour overtake" you, will you supplicate anyone other than Allah, should you be truthful? Rather, Him you will supplicate, and He will remove that for which you supplicated Him, if He wishes, and you will forget what you ascribe [to Him] as [His] partners'."(۱)

This verse denotes that all idols get forgotten in crises and all idolaters, on the demand of their primordial natures, ask Allah to solve their problems.

Second verse:

Say, 'Who delivers you from the darkness of land and sea, [when] you invoke Him" suppliantly and secretly: 'If He delivers us from this, we will surely be among the grateful'?' Say, 'It is Allah who delivers you from them and from every agony, [but] then you ascribe partners [to Him]'."(۲)

Third verse:

It is He who carries you across land and sea. When you are in the ships, and they sail" with them with a favorable wind, rejoicing

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۱- Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۴۰-۴۱.
۲- Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۶۳-۶۴.

in it. There upon a tempestuous wind and waves assail them from every side, and they think that they are besieged. They invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, 'If you deliver us from this, we will surely be among the grateful.' But when He delivers them, behold, they commit violations on the earth unduly! O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment. [These are] the wares of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return, whereat We will inform you concerning what you used to do."(۱)

Fourth verse:

When they board the ship, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when" He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him]."(۲)

"Putting exclusive faith in Him"

means that they become monotheists. Other verses related to this discussion are:

"They ask you to hasten the punishment. Yet were it not for a specified time, the punishment would have surely overtaken them. Surely, it will overtake them suddenly while they are unaware. They ask you to hasten the punishment, and indeed Hell will besiege the faithless."(۳)

"And when distress befalls you at sea, those whom you invoke besides Him are forsaken. But when He delivers you to land, you are disregardful [of Him]. And man is very ungrateful."(۴)

"When distress befalls people, they supplicate their Lord, turning to Him in penitence. Then, when He lets them taste His mercy, behold, a part of them ascribe partners to their Lord."(۵)

Awakening the primordial nature of polytheists

point

It can be deduced from Qur'anic verses that Allah, the Exalted,

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۱- Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۲۲-۲۳.

۲- Sūrat al-'Ankabūt ۲۹:۶۵.

۳- Sūrat al-'Ankabūt ۲۹:۵۳-۵۴.

۴- Sūrat al-Isrā' (or Banī Isrā'īl) ۱۷:۶۷.

۵- Sūrat al-Rūm ۳۰:۳۳.

uses various means to get rid of delusions and awaken sleeping primordial natures. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an related to this subject, a few examples of which will suffice to illustrate our assertion.

First verse:

Say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, and peace be to His servants whom He has chosen.'" Is Allah better, or the partners they ascribe [to Him]? Is He who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the sky, whereby We grow (delightful gardens, whose trees you could never cause to grow…?(۱

What! Is there a god besides Allah? Rather, they are a lot who equate [others with Allah]. Is He who made the earth an abode [for you], and made rivers [flowing] through it, and set firm mountains for it, and set a barrier between two seas…? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Rather, most of them do not know. Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress, and makes you the earth's successors…? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Little is the admonition that you take. Is He who guides you in the darkness of land and sea and ?…who sends the winds as harbingers of His mercy

What! Is there a god besides Allah? Exalted is Allah above [having] any partners they ascribe [to Him]. Is He who originates the creation, then He will bring it back, and who provides for you from the sky

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۱- Ellipsis: the omitted phrase here and in the following verses (۶۱-۶۴) is 'better or the '.partners they ascribe to Him

and the earth…? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Say, 'Produce your evidence, should you be truthful.' Say, 'No one in the heavens or the earth knows the Unseen (except Allah, and they do not know when they will be resurrected'."(۱

These verses ask man's primordial nature to judge who is better between the ?partners (i.e. idols) they ascribe to Allah or Allah Himself

Once entangled in hardships, idolaters used to conceive that the remover of all :distresses was Allah

"Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and

"?...removes his distress, and makes you the earth's successors

:Second verse

He draws for you an example from yourselves: do you have among your slaves any" partners [who may share] in what We have provided you, so that you are equal in its respect, and you revere them as you revere one another? Thus, do We elaborate(٢) (the signs for a people who apply reason."(٣

Majma' al-Bayān" recounts from Sa'īd bin Jubayr that the reason of revelation of this" verse was that idolaters used to accept Allah's will or call in this way, "Thy will be done, O God. Your only partner is one of your own creatures, who shares in what you have provided." That is to say, Allah is the owner of His partner and its possessions. .The above quoted verse seeks to refute this idolatrous assertion

It can be deduced from the reason of revelation of this verse that the level of idolatrous thinking was so low that they

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١- Sūrat al-Naml ٢٧:٥٩-٦٥.

٢- Or 'articulate'.

٣- Sūrat al-Rūm ٣٠:٢٨.

used to believe that Allah had a partner from among His own creatures! This necessitates that the partner exists independently besides Allah, and the belief that Allah's partner is one of His own creatures actually means that the presumed partner ?is actually not a partner. How can these two contradictory beliefs be compromised

:Third verse

It is Allah who created you and then He provided for you, then He makes you die," then He will bring you to life. Is there anyone among your partners who does anything of that kind? Immaculate is He and exalted above [having] any partners that they (ascribe [to Him]!"(١

This verse initially explains Allah's deeds, one of which is creation, and the other is providing sustenance, and the third is making mankind die and the fourth is bringing man to life again. Then, it asks the primordial nature of idolaters, "Is there anyone among your partners who does anything of that kind?"

Fourth verse:

He created the heavens without any pillars that you may see, and cast firm mountains in the earth lest it shake with you, and He has scattered in it every kind of animal. And We sent down water from the sky and caused every splendid kind [of plant] to grow in it. This is the creation of Allah. Now, show Me what others besides Him have created. Rather, the wrongdoers are in manifest error."(٢)

The verse "This is the creation of Allah. Now show Me what others besides Him have created" intends to awaken the sleeping inner conscience

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١- ٣٠:۴٠ Sūrat al-Rūm.

٢- ٣١:١٠-١١ Sūrat Luqmān.

of idolaters.

Demonstrating the weakness of idols

point

In some verses of the Holy Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, intends to clarify the weakness and inability of idols to perform the least of deeds so that the primordial natures of idolaters may awaken and make them stop living in fantasy. In order to complete the previous discussion in this regard, we will quote a few verses:

First verse:

"O mankind! Listen to a parable that is being drawn: indeed those whom you invoke besides Allah will never create [even] a fly even if they rallied to do so! And if a fly

should take away something from them, they cannot recover that from it. Feeble is the seeker and the sought!"(1)

This verse has clearly shown the weakness of idols; how can a being which is helpless against a fly be a partner of Allah, the Omnipotent? There is not the least compatibility between these two partners. Can an explanation more rational than this be found to awaken the sleeping inner conscience of idolaters?

The verse following the above quoted one states:

"They do not regard Allah with the regard due to Him. Indeed, Allah is the All-powerful, All-mighty."(2)

Evidently, this verse complains that idolaters did not conceive the greatness of Allah. Thy equated Him with creatures weaker than a fly despite the fact that He possesses invincible power.

Second verse:

"The parable of those who take guardians instead of Allah is that of the spider that takes a home, and indeed the frailest of homes is the home of a spider, had they but known! Allah indeed

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۱- Sūrat al-Hajj ۲۲:۷۳.

۲- Sūrat al-Hajj ۲۲:۷۴.

knows whatever thing they invoke besides Him, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise. And We draw these parables for mankind; but no one grasps them except those who have knowledge."(1)

In [the book of Qur'anic exegesis entitled] "Shubbar", 'guardians' [awliyā'] has been interpreted as idols, and it has been said, "They used to take idols as their protectors besides Allah, despite that they are frailer than spiders' webs, which can be destroyed

".by a finger

An interesting point in the above quoted verse is its assertion that idolatry is a very weak and infirm creed, which is not based on any rational and narrated proof; it is a creed as frail as a spider's web, which can be destroyed by merely blowing air at it! For instance, when idolaters were asked why they worshipped idols, they used to respond that they were following in the footsteps of their ancestors.

It has thus been written in [the book of Qur'anic exegesis entitled] "Tafsīr Kishāf", "If you examine all kinds of homes one by one, you will find out that the weakest of homes is the spider's web. Likewise, if you enquire into all the world religions, you will find out that idolatry is the most infirm or frailest of them all.

"Had they known" also bears a very interesting point; it denotes that if idolaters had paid heed to their primordial natures, they would have conceived that idolatry is the weakest of creeds, but perhaps it is impossible for them to realize this.

"And We

p: ١٢١

١- Sūrat al-'Ankabūt ٢٩:٤١-٤٣.

draw these parables for mankind":

In this section of the above quoted verse, Allah states that the goal of drawing these parables is to awaken man's rational faculty.

It has thus been written in "Tafsīr Shubbar", "But no one grasps them except those who have knowledge" means thinkers and intellectuals. Idolaters lack knowledge because they do not undertake intellectual endeavor; that is to say, they would have understood the purport of these parables, had they been people of intellectual endeavor. Their lack of understanding is due to their lack of intellectual effort.

Truly, is there a more expressive explanation for awakening the sleeping primordial

!?natures of idolaters than to explain the inability and weakness of idols

:Third verse

Say, ‘Invoke them whom you claim [to be gods] besides Allah! They do not control“ [even] an atom’s weight in the heavens or the earth, nor have they any share in ([either of] them, nor is any of them(١) His supporter’.”(٢

:Fourth verse

Only] to Him belongs the true invocation;(٣) and those whom they invoke besides]“ Him do not answer them in any way—like someone who stretches his hands towards water [desiring] that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it—and the (invocations of the faithless only go awry.”(۴

Only] to Him belongs the true invocation”(۵) means worship; that is to say, real]“ worship is a prerogative of Allah because He is the true God and besides Allah, no creature deserves to be worshipped and invoked. Idols are not real, and they do not have the least effect in

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.That is, of the people of Mecca -١

.Sūrat Saba’ ٣۴:٢٢ -٢

.’Or ‘His is the invitation to the truth’, or ‘He is the true invitation -٣

.Sūrat al-Ra‘d ١٣:١۴ -۴

.’Or ‘His is the invitation to the truth’, or ‘He is the true invitation -۵

the existing cosmos. In the above quoted verse, invocation of Allah has been .compared with invocation of idols; the former is valid and the latter is invalid

:Other verses in this regard are

(Those whom you invoke besides Him can neither help you, nor help themselves.”(١“

Certainly, We had given to Abraham his rectitude before, and We knew him when he“

said to his father and his people, 'What are these images to which you keep clinging?' They said, 'We found our fathers worshipping them.' He said, 'Certainly, you and your fathers have been in manifest error.' They said, 'Are you telling the truth,(٢) or are you just kidding?' He said, 'Rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who originated them, and I am a witness to this. By Allah, I will devise a stratagem against your idols after you have gone away.' So, he broke them into pieces—all except the biggest of them—so they might come back to it. They said, 'Whoever has ?done this to Our gods

He is indeed a wrongdoer! They said, 'We heard a young man speaking ill of them. He is called 'Abraham'.' They said, 'Bring him before the people's eyes so that they may bear witness [against him].' They said, 'Was it you who did this to our gods, O Abraham?' He said, 'Rather, it was this biggest of them who did it! Ask them, if they can speak.' Thereat, they came to themselves and said [to one another], 'Indeed, it

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١- Sūrat al-A'rāf ٧:١٩٧.

٢- Or 'Are you speaking seriously?'

.is you who are the wrongdoers!' Then, they hung their heads

They said, 'You certainly know that they cannot speak.' He said, 'Do you then worship, besides Allah that which cannot cause you any benefit or harm? Fie on you and what you worship besides Allah! Do you not apply reason?' They said, 'Burn him, and help your gods, if you are to do anything!' We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!' They sought to outmaneuver him, but we made them the greatest losers."(١)

Chapter ٧: Causes of Idolatry

point

In the previous lesson, it has been explained that idolatry was not based on any proof, whether rational or transmitted from heavenly books. On this basis, we have to find out what factors led them to this creed. A few causes can be inferred from Qur'anic

:verses

Not knowing Allah .۱

The first cause of idolatry was not having the correct knowledge of Allah therefore equating Him with created things. It can be deduced from a number of verses that polytheists used to conceive that Allah was the same as created beings and that He had a spouse and offspring. Jews used to believe that Ezra was the son of Allah and Christians used to maintain that Jesus Christ was the son of God. They even used to :believe that Allah had taken a spouse, as can be inferred from the following verses

)Exalted be the majesty of our Lord, He has taken neither any spouse nor son."(۲"

.Say, 'He is Allah, the One. Allah is the All-embracing"

.Sūrat al-Anbiyā' ۲۱:۵۲-۷۰ -۱

.Sūrat al-Jinn ۷۲:۳ -۲

)He neither begat, nor was begotten, nor has He any equal'."(۱

In "Nahj al-Balāghah", Imām 'Alī ('a) has excellently explained the ignorance of :polytheists

He originated the creation without any example which He could follow and without" any specimen prepared by any known creator that was before Him. He showed us the realm of His might, and such wonders which speak of His wisdom. The confession of the created things that their existence owes itself to Him made us realize that all argument has been finished about knowing Him (so that there is no excuse against it.) The signs of His creative power and standard of His wisdom are fixed in the wonderful things He has created. Whatever He has created is an argument in His favor and a guide towards Him. Even a silent thing is a guide towards Him as though it speaks, and .its guidance towards the Creator is clear

O Allah! I stand witness that he who likens Thee with the separateness of the limbs or with the joining of the extremities of his body did not acquaint his inner self with knowledge about Thee, and his heart did not secure conviction to the effect that there is no partner for Thee. It is as though he has not heard the (wrongful) followers disclaiming their false gods by saying, 'By Allah, we had indeed been in manifest error, (when we equated you with the Lord of all the worlds!"(٢)

They are wrong who liken Thee to their idols, and"

.Sūrat al-Ikhlās ١١٢:١-۴ -١

.Sūrat al-Shu'arā ٢۶:٩٧-٩٨ -٢

dress Thee with the apparel of the creatures with their imagination, attribute to Thee parts of body of their own thinking and consider Thee after the creatures of various types, through the working of their intelligence. I stand witness that whoever equated Thee with anything out of Thy creation took a match for Thee, and whoever takes a match for Thee is an unbeliever, according to what is stated in Thy unambiguous verses and indicated by the evidence of Thy clear arguments. (I also stand witness that) Thou art that Allah who cannot be confined in (the fetters of) intelligence so as to admit change of condition by entering its imagination nor in the shackles of mind so as (to become limited and an object of alterations."(١)

In this sermon, Imām 'Alī ('a) has clearly explained that on account of not having correct knowledge, idolaters used to conceive Allah as created things and their .deficient intellects used to imagine that he had limbs and body parts

:In the paragraph preceding the above quoted one, Imām 'Alī ('a) has stated

Then look on questioner, be confined to those of His attributes which the Qur'an..." has described and seek light from the effulgence of its guidance. Leave to Allah that knowledge which Satan has prompted you to seek and which neither the Qur'an enjoins you to seek nor is there any trace of it in the actions or sayings of the Noble

Prophet (s) and other Imāms of Guidance. This is the extreme limit of

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.Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon [khutbah] no. ۹۰ -۱

Allah's claim upon you. Know that firm in knowledge are those who refrain from opening the curtains that lie against the unknown, and their acknowledgement of ignorance about the details of the hidden unknown prevents them from further probe. Allah praises them for their admission that they are unable to get knowledge not allowed to them. They do not go deep into discussion of what is not enjoined upon them about knowing Him and they call it firmness. Be content with this and do not limit the greatness of Allah after the measure of your own intelligence, or else you will be among the destroyed ones. He is the Powerful, such that when imagination shoots its arrows to comprehend the extremity of His power; or the mind, making itself free of the dangers of thoughts, tries to find Him in the depth of His realm; or hearts, longing to grasp realities of His Attributes and openings of intelligence, penetrate beyond description in order to secure knowledge about His Being and cross the dark pitfalls of the unknown concentrating upon Him, He turns them back. They return defeated, admitting that the reality of His knowledge cannot be comprehended by such random efforts, nor can an iota of the sublimity of His honor enter the understanding of (thinkers."(۱

:Two points can be deduced from Imām 'Alī's ('a) statement

A person who knows Allah in the way that prophets ('a) and the Imāms ('a) have .۱ .instructed mankind cannot believe that Allah has a partner

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.Ibid -۱

In short, if a person believes that Allah created the earth and the sky and that whatever is between them belongs to Him can never hold that Allah has a partner and

an equal. How can a rational man maintain that Allah's partner is one of His own .creatures? These two beliefs cannot co-exist

Taking the first point into consideration, and also considering that idolaters used to .۲ believe that it was Allah who created the earth and the sky and whatever is between them, the question which comes to mind is: how did polytheists come to believe that Allah had a partner? The response to this question is that the root of their polytheistic beliefs lay in their misconception that Allah was like created things. They imagined that Allah had a partner in the same way that two created beings could be one .another's partner in cosmic affairs

Self-worship .۲

point

It can be inferred from the Holy Qur'an that another cause of idolatry was following :carnal desires. A number of verses denote this

:First verse

Say, 'I have been forbidden to worship those whom you invoke besides Allah.' Say, 'I" do not follow your desires, for then I will have gone astray, and I will not be among (the [rightly] guided'."(۱

This verse denotes that in their idolatry, idolaters were under the influence of their .carnal and sensual desires

:Second verse

These are but names which you have coined—you and your fathers—for which Allah" has not sent down any authority. They follow nothing but conjectures and the desires of the

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.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۵۶ -۱

(lower] soul, while there has already come to them the guidance from their Lord."(١]

Blindly following their forefathers .٣

point

It can be inferred from many verses of the Holy Qur'an that idolaters used to believe in polytheism on account of blindly following their fathers and the customs of their :forefathers. We will adduce some verses in this regard

:First verse

He said, 'You have taken idols [for worship] besides Allah for the sake of [mutual]" affection amongst yourselves in the life of the world. Then, on the Day of Resurrection you will disown one another and curse one another, and the Fire will be your abode, (and you will not have any supporters'."(٢

In "Tafsīr al-Mīzān", this verse has been interpreted as denoting that idolaters used to worship idols on account of their mutual affection and family relations. When they were asked why they were worshipping idols, they used to respond that they were following in the footsteps of their fathers. Therefore, some people were idolaters because their fathers had been idolaters and thus descendants too became .polytheists on account of affection and love for their ancestors

:Second verse

When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We will rather" follow what we found our fathers following.' What! Even if Satan be calling them to the (punishment of the Blaze?"(٣

Chapter ٨: Categories of Polytheists

point

In this discourse, we will refer to some of the categories of polytheists which have .been mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an

The first category: calf-worshippers

.The People of the Book ask you to bring down for them a Book from the sky"

p: ١٢٩

.Sūrat al-Najm ٥٣:٢٣ -١

.Sūrat al-'Ankabūt ٢٩:٢٥ -٢

.Sūrat Luqmān ٣١:٢١ -٣

Certainly, they asked Moses for [something] greater than that, for they said, 'Show us Allah visibly,' whereat a thunderbolt seized them for their wrongdoing. Then, they took up the Calf [for worship], after all the manifest proofs that had come to them. Yet (We excused that, And We gave Moses a manifest authority."(١

Even if the above quoted verse does not explicitly state that they took up the Calf for worship, but still interpreters of the Holy Qur'an have asserted that they had taken the Calf for a god. It has thus been written in "Majma' al-Bayān", "They used to worship the Calf and used to believe that it was a god." It has thus been written in ".“Tafsīr al-Mīzān", "This was idolatry, and the Calf had been taken for a god

The second category: worshippers of Jesus Christ and Mary

There have been people who used to worship Jesus Christ and Mary and the following :verse denotes this assertion

And when Allah will say, 'O Jesus son of Mary! Was it you who said to the people," 'Take me and my mother for gods besides Allah'?' He will say, 'Immaculate are You! It does not behoove me to say what I have no right to [say]. Had I said it, You certainly would have known it: You know whatever is in my self, and I do not know what is in (Your Self. Indeed, You are knower of all that is Unseen'."(٢

It can be deduced from the above quoted verse that Christians used to believe that Jesus Christ and Mary were

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.Sūrat al-Nisā’ ۴:۱۵۳ -۱
.Sūrat al-Mā’idah ۵:۱۱۶ -۲

.gods

It has thus been stated in “Tafsīr al-Mīzān”, “This verse means that besides Allah, they had taken Jesus Christ (‘a) and Mary (‘a) for gods; [this verse does] not [mean] that they had opted for Jesus Christ (‘a) and Mary (‘a) instead of Allah. In other words, some people imagine that Christians have forsaken Allah and only worship Jesus Christ (‘a) and Mary (‘a), but this is not what this verse means. It means that besides believing that Allah is God, they also believed in the divinity of two other gods, and this (is what is called ‘the Trinity’.”(۱

It has thus been written in “Majma‘ al-Bayān”, “Why does the Holy Qur’an state that Christians used to worship Jesus Christ (‘a) and Mary (‘a) despite the fact that some Christians never worshipped Mary? There are two probable answers to this question: ۱) that god in the above quoted verse does not denote literal meaning, but denotes honoring, because Christians respect Jesus Christ (‘a) and his mother to the same extent that they respect Allah. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur’an has employed the word ‘gods’ [ilāhayn]. In reality, the above quoted verse does not mean that Christians considered these two as gods; ۲) there were some Christians who used to (worship Mary, as has been recounted by Shaykh Tūsī.”(۲

Shaykh Tūsī’s statement regarding the existence of a group of Christians who used to worship Mary has been recounted in “Tafsīr al-Mīzān”. “Tafsīr al-Mīzān” has also ”quoted from “Tafsīr al-Minār

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.Tafsīr Al-Mīzān, vol. ۶, p. ۲۴۳ -۱
.Majma‘ al-Bayān, vol. ۳, p. ۲۶۸ -۲

that the statue of Mary had been placed in all Christian churches, but Protestants

abstained from worshipping Mary centuries after the advent of Islam. However, Catholics continued to worship Mary and used to take pride in doing so. Initially, both groups used to worship Mary, and placed her statue in their tabernacles and bowed .down to it

Third category: worshippers of the jinn

They make the jinn partners of Allah, though He has created them, and carve out“ sons and daughters for Him, without any knowledge. Immaculate is He and exalted (above what they allege [concerning Him]!”(١

Chapter ٩: Types of Polytheism

point

Polytheism, in its various respects, has different divisions, some of which we will :examine hereunder

Polytheism in Divinity .١

Polytheism in divinity denotes believing that besides Allah, another being is equally effective in the existing cosmos. This has previously been treated in detail under “longitudinal and latitudinal polytheism”, and we adduced many reasons to prove that idolaters used to believe that idols can harm and benefit man as well as intercede on his behalf. For this reason, their polytheism can be called ‘ideological idolatry’; it can also be termed ‘manifest polytheism’ because they used to openly declare their .idolatry

Polytheism in obedience .٢

point

In this type of idolatry, the polytheist does not believe in the existence of effective beings besides Allah, but follows and obeys another creature besides Allah. The axis .of this kind of polytheism is following and obeying other than Allah

:Obeying other than Allah is of three kinds

First: Obeying other than Allah because Allah has ordered man to do so; for instance, Allah has ordered that

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.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۰۰ -۱

the Noble Prophet (s) and the Imāms ('a) ought to be obeyed. This kind of obedience is exactly the same as obeying Allah:

O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with" authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favorable in outcome."(۱)

Here, we do not have two kinds of obedience, but one kind, and this is tantamount to .monotheism

Second: Obeying other than Allah in permissible matters of which Allah has not given specific orders; for example, drinking water in instances where Allah has not issued any specific orders. Now, if someone issues a definite order to drink water and we obey him, this would amount to obeying other than Allah, despite that it is not incompatible with monotheism because we have obeyed someone in a matter which Allah has permitted, even if it is not like the first kind, which is exactly like obeying .Allah

Third: Obeying other than Allah in a matter which conflicts and is incompatible with obeying Allah; for example, Allah has given orders that the ritual prayers ought to be performed, and someone else forbids the prayers. In this case, not performing the ritual prayers on account of obeying someone besides Allah is tantamount to polytheism in obedience; that is to say, one has preferred to obey someone other than Allah and has believed that obedience, which a prerogative of Allah, pertains to .someone other than Allah

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.Sūrat al-Nisā’ ۴:۵۹ -۱

In short, obeying someone who opposes Allah denotes polytheism in obedience, and .this is harām and forbidden. Obeying Satan is also of this kind

Democracy and obedience to Allah

Obeying any law which is incompatible or contrary to Allah’s injunctions is polytheism in obedience, even if that law is [put forward] in the form of democracy. Democracy is approved when it is compatible with Divine injunctions or anything that is permitted by Divine law, but there is no democracy in the wājib (obligatory religious duties) and the harām (inviolable religious things). Even if all people were to vote that ritual prayers ought to be renounced, or that alcohol ought to be legalized, their ballot does .not have any value

Allah has commanded obedience to the Infallible Imām (‘a), and during his Occultation, the Islamic jurist. Obeying the Islamic jurist and leader is exactly the same as monotheism in obedience and following forbidden democracy is exactly the .same as polytheism in obedience

It is for this same reason that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that after the president has been elected, the consent or endorsement of the Islamic jurist and leader is necessary, because the people’s vote does not by itself give him the religious authority to rule and be obeyed. The endorsement of the Islamic jurist and leader makes obeying the president tantamount to obeying Allah, and exactly the .same as monotheism

The prohibition of polytheism in obedience

point

:The following verse proves the prohibition of polytheism in obedience

:First verse

Among the people are those who set up compeers besides Allah, loving them“

as if loving Allah—but the faithful have a more ardent love for Allah—though the wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power, altogether, belongs (to Allah, and that Allah is severe in punishment.”(۱

It has been mentioned in “Majma‘ al-Bayān” that this verse means one of the :following two possibilities

Most interpreters of the Holy Qur’an have said that ‘compeers’ [indād] means idols .۱ worshipped by polytheists, meaning that some of the people love idols in the same .way that they love Allah

Some interpreters of the Holy Qur’an have said that ‘compeers’ means leaders and .۲ elders of any community who are obeyed and followed by their community. There is a hadīth transmitted from Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) that ‘compeers’ means oppressive leaders .and their followers

It is clear that ‘compeers’ does not exclusively mean leaders of a community, but also includes others, such as idols, which are followed by human beings. According to the second possibility, the above quoted verse will be interpreted in this way, “Some ”.people love and obey their leaders in the same way that they love and obey Allah

It has thus been written in “Tafsīr al-Mīzān”, “‘Compeers’ does not mean idols only, but also includes angels and human beings whom people have taken as their leaders and whom they obey without Allah’s permission. The following verse proves this :assertion

When those who were followed will disown the followers, and they will sight the“ (punishment while all their means of recourse will be cut off.”(۲

It can be deduced that

.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۶۵ -۱
.Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۶۶ -۲

because verse ۱۶۶ pertains to leaders of a community and the people who follow them, verse ۱۶۵ also refers to leaders of a community and does not exclusively pertain to idols. This is also confirmed by the aforementioned hadīth transmitted from Imām al-Bāqir ('a) that all oppressive leaders are conceived as 'compeers'.(۱)

According to the meaning of the verse, as has also been mentioned in "Tafsīr al-Mīzān", every person who is followed besides Allah is considered a compeer [of Allah], and obeying him is polytheism, even if he is an ordinary person and not a leader of the community, and even if we obey him besides Allah only on one instance.

:Second verse

"As for those who stay clear of the worship of the Rebel and turn penitently to Allah, there is good news for them. So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [sense] of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who posses intellect."(۲)

It has thus been written in "Majma' al-Bayān", "The Rebel [in the above quoted verse] means idols and Satan, and other interpreters of the Holy Qur'an have said that the Rebel [tāghūt] denotes every individual who leads people to other than Allah. Therefore, it can be inferred that the above quoted verse means that there is good news for those who stay clear of the worship and obedience of idols, Satan and all people who lead people to other than Allah." We will

.Tafsīr al-Mīzān, vol. ۱, p. ۴۰۵, exegesis of verse ۱۶۵ of Sūrat al-Baqarah -۱
.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۱۷-۱۸ -۲

.later prove that worship denotes obedience

It may be asked why it has been inferred that people who follow the Rebel are polytheists? The response is that the verses preceding the above quoted verse pertain to polytheists. Verses ۱۷ and ۱۸ explain the attributes of monotheists, one of which is staying clear of the worship and obedience of the Rebel. Therefore, it becomes clear that the opposite of this is worshipping and obeying Satan, and this .refers to polytheists

Of course, we do not intend to say that juristic laws like being impure and others result or derive from polytheism in obedience, but we would like to say that one kind .of polytheism is polytheism in obedience

Manifest and hidden polytheism .۳

point

.The term hidden polytheism [shirk khafī] is found a lot in books of ethics

Hidden polytheism is sometimes called minor polytheism [shirk asghar]. These two terms are employed as opposites of manifest polytheism [shirk jallī] and greater .[polytheism [shirk akbar

Hidden polytheism and/or minor polytheism have not been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, but with the help of some hadīths, some verses have been interpreted as .referring to this kind of polytheism. We will discuss this later

Hidden polytheism has not been defined in the hadīths, but what has been mentioned in the traditions are explanations about instances and examples of hidden polytheism. One criterion [for hidden polytheism] has to be deduced by studying various instances of hidden polytheism. Therefore, it is necessary to initially adduce some of the hadīths :in which hidden polytheism has been mentioned

Imām al-Sādiq .۱

a) stated, “Do not be sanctimonious in your deeds, and do not perform your actions‘) with the intention of showing someone who is not able to make you live or die, and who is not capable of solving any one of your problems because ostentation is a tree (whose fruit is nothing else but hidden polytheism.”(۱

Imām al-Sādiq (‘a) interpreted the Noble Prophet’s (s) statement that “Polytheism is .۲ more hidden than the movement of an ant on a black stone in a dark night,” thus, “The believers used to curse or speak ill about idols. This made idolaters also lose respect for Allah. Allah forbade Muslims from cursing idols so that unbelievers may not speak ill of Allah. Therefore, as a result of their cursing idols, the believers had unknowingly (believed in a partner for Allah.”(۲

:Muslims can be conceived as becoming polytheists in two ways

a) They became polytheists by opposing Allah’s prohibition that they ought not to .curse idols. Of course, this is hidden polytheism

b) They became polytheists because they incite idolaters to speak ill of Allah and this .by itself is a kind propagating idolatry unknowingly

The Noble Prophet (s) stated, “Refrain from minor polytheism.” They asked him .۳ what minor polytheism meant. He responded, “It means sanctimony and (ostentation.”(۳

The following are the verses which have been interpreted as referring to hidden :polytheism

:First verse

”.And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him“

Imām al-Sādiq (‘a) thus interpreted this verse, “A man who says that if so and

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.”Mustadrik al-Wasā’il al-Shī‘ah, vol. ۲, p. ۱۰۷, as quoted from “Misbāh al-Sharī‘ah -۱

."Bihār al-Anwār, vol. ۶۹, p. ۹۳, as quoted from "Tafsīr Qummī -۲
.Kishāf, exegesis of verse ۱۱۰ of Sūrat al-Kahf -۳

so were not there [to help him], he would have been afflicted with hardships and his family would have been exterminated, has ascribed a partner to Allah; a partner in whom he puts faith and believes that he provides sustenance and repels calamities." The transmitter of [this] hadīth says, "I asked Imām al-Sādiq ('a), 'Is saying that I would have been afflicted by hardships if Allah had not been merciful to me by sending so and so to help me the same as ascribing a partner to Allah?' Imām al-Sādiq ('a) responded, 'This is not forbidden'."(۱)

:Second verse

Say, "I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is" One God. So whoever expects to encounter his Lord—let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord'."(۲)

In regard to this verse, Imām al-Sādiq ('a) stated, "This kind of polytheism is sanctimony."(۳)

In another hadīth, a transmitter of traditions has said, "I went to see the Noble Prophet (s) and noticed that his face showed signs of anger. I asked why he was angry. His Holiness [the Noble Prophet (s)] responded, 'I fear lest my community become polytheists.' I asked, 'Your community will become polytheists after you have left?' The Noble Prophet (s) responded, 'Beware! My community will not worship the sun, the moon, idols and/or stones, but will be sanctimonious in their deeds, and sanctimony is exactly the same as polytheism, which I fear will engulf my community.' Then, he recited this

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.Majma' al-Bayān, vol. ۵, p. ۴۶۲ -۱
.Sūrat al-Kahf ۱۱۰ -۲
.Mustadrik al-Wasā'il, vol. ۱, p. ۱۰۴ -۳

verse, ‘So whoever expects to encounter his Lord—let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord’.”(١)

Characteristics of manifest and hidden polytheism

It is proper to explain the characteristics of manifest polytheism so that we may infer the meaning and criterion of its opposite namely, hidden polytheism. Manifest polytheism though not clearly defined in Qur’anic verses and the hadīths means the polytheism which the prophets (‘a) battled with and which made monotheists and polytheists encounter each other at war.

Characteristics of manifest polytheism

Here, we will not mention or explain all the characteristics of manifest polytheism, but only some of them:

١. A polytheist who is engulfed by manifest polytheism believes that, besides Allah, there is another being in the existing cosmos which is independently effective and conceives idols as independent gods besides Allah.

٢. Polytheists who are under the influence of manifest polytheism love their idols intensely, and are antipathetic to monotheism.

“When Allah is mentioned alone, [thereat] shrink away the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter, but when others are mentioned besides Him, behold, they rejoice!”(٢)

It can be concluded from this verse that idolaters used to become disgusted when monotheism was mentioned. This can also be inferred from the following two verses:

“And We cast veils on their hearts, lest they should understand it, and a deafness into their ears. When you mention your Lord alone in the Qur’an, they turn their backs in aversion.”(٣)

“Do not abuse those whom they invoke besides Allah, lest they should abuse Allah out

of hostility,(۴) without any knowledge. That

.Ibid., p. ۱۰۹ -۱

.Sūrat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۵ -۲

.Sūrat al-Isrā’ (or Banī Isrā’īl) ۱۷:۴۶ -۳

’.Or ‘out of transgression,’ or ‘wrongfully -۴

is how to every people We have made their conduct seem decorous. Then, their return will be to their Lord and He will inform them concerning what they used to (do.”(۱

Therefore, aversion to monotheism is one of the best distinctive features of those .engulfed by manifest polytheism

Manifest polytheism was expressed through such actions as placing idols in houses .۳ .and tabernacles, and giving idols names such as Lāt and ‘Uzzā

Absence of the aforementioned characteristics in hidden polytheism

None of the three aforementioned characteristics are found in a person who is engulfed in hidden polytheism. Therefore, a person who is affected by hidden :polytheism has the following three qualities

A person who is under the influence of hidden polytheism never believes that there .۱ is an effective being independent of Allah and latitudinal with Him [in the existing cosmos]. He does not believe that there is a being which is effective besides Allah. Of course, out of heedlessness, he may sometimes conceive that someone besides Allah .is effective, but as soon as he is admonished, he realizes his mistake and repents

A person who is under the influence of hidden polytheism never has aversion for .۲ monotheism. He is not hostile when the Oneness of Allah is mentioned, but loves the .Oneness of Allah

A person who is engulfed by hidden polytheism does not make tabernacles for idols .۳
.but is affected by sanctimony or ostentation

Now, taking into consideration the aforementioned issues, we have to define and set up a criterion for hidden polytheism. Evidently, the most comprehensive criterion of hidden polytheism

p: ۱۴۱

.Sūrat al-An'ām ۶:۱۰۸ -۱

has been put forward by Qal'ajī, who has said, "Minor polytheism denotes considering or taking into view a being other than Allah when performing deeds."(۱)

.This is a very good criterion

But in a hadīth transmitted from Imām al-Sādiq ('a), a higher criterion has been :mentioned

A transmitter of hadīth says, "I asked Imām al-Sādiq ('a) what this Qur'anic verse means, 'The Day when neither wealth nor children will avail except him who comes to Allah with a sound heart.' His Holiness ('a) responded, 'A sound heart is one which meets Allah while there is nothing besides Allah in it. This is attainable only by those who have decided to be ascetic in this world so that their hearts may be prepared for the hereafter'."(۲)

This hadīth too has stated that the criterion of hidden polytheism is paying heed to other beings instead of Allah. What have been mentioned in the aforementioned hadīths are instances of hidden polytheism. Of course, the religious injunction for hidden polytheism is not like the injunction for manifest polytheism. Manifest polytheism makes one a pagan and impure, and the jihād against him becomes wājib (obligatory), in the same way that the jihād against idolaters is wājib (obligatory) once .ordered by an [Infallible] Imām

Sanctimony and non-devotional deeds

Another difference between hidden polytheism and other kinds of polytheism is that hidden polytheism is not harām (prohibited) in all instances. To illustrate this point, we will quote what Shahīd Āyatullāh Dastghayb said, "Worldly affairs which do not have an aspect of worship have not been explicitly

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.Mu'jam Lughah al-Fuqahā', p. ۲۶۱ -۱

.Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. ۴, section [bāb] al-Ikhlās, hadīth ۵ -۲

classified as harām (prohibited). That is why jurists do not issue religious decrees stating that it is harām (prohibited). But as a precautionary measure, believers have to abstain from all kinds of sanctimony, even in worldly affairs."(۱)

Sanctimony in deeds which Allah has enjoined, such as the ritual, is harām (prohibited), but it is not harām (prohibited) in ordinary issues, such as eating food; for instance, it is not harām (prohibited) for one to eat less out of sanctimony.

?(Chapter ۱۰: What is Tawhīd (Monotheism

point

It is now proper for us to briefly discuss monotheism so that we may understand what the term monotheist, which is contrasted with polytheist, means and who is called a monotheist.

In "Nahj al-Balāghah", Imām 'Alī ('a) said, "Monotheism denotes not conjecturing about Him and justice means not accusing Him."(۲)

It can be deduced from this statement that monotheism is the opposite of polytheism, which denotes conjecturing about Allah. This hadīth alludes to the root of idolatry and polytheism, which derive from conjecture and fantasy. A polytheist imagines that Allah has partners. This is confirmed by a hadīth transmitted from Imām al-Sādiq ('a) that, "Every person who imagines that Allah is like any one of His creatures is a polytheist, because neither is Allah like a thing [from among His creatures] nor is a

thing [from among His creatures] like Him. Allah is other than whatever is imagined [in (the mind]."(۳)

It is said that an ant imagines that Allah, just like itself, has two feelers (antennae). That is to say, it imagines

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۱- Greater Sins, discourse on polytheism [shirk bi'llāh].

۲- Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon [khutbah] no. ۴۶۲.

۳- Tawhīd Sadūq, p. ۸۰, hadīth ۳۶.

Allah according to its mental perception. We too [as] human beings do not have the right to liken Allah to creatures as conceived by our minds. Allah is contrary to whatever we may imagine and what He is other than what we conjure up. With respect to Allah, we only have to say that He is Pre-eternal, Everlasting, All-mighty and nothing is like Him. In this regard, it is befitting to recount what Shaykh Mufīd has transmitted from Shaykh Sadūq:

"Know that our Shi'ite conviction is that Allah is One, who is not like any creature. He is Pre-eternal and Everlasting. He hears, sees, and knows. He is Wise and Alive, and He rules over everything. He is an Invincible Power. He is Immaculate and Impeccable. He is Needless. He cannot be described, and He has no body or substance. He has no length, breadth and surface. He is neither heavy nor light. He is neither stationary nor mobile. He has neither time nor place.

"He is not affected by qualities of creatures and none is like Him. He is a thing that is not like other things. He is absolutely needless. He neither has an off-spring nor is He someone's offspring. He neither has an equal nor a partner. Eyes and minds cannot conceive Him, but He conceives eyes and minds. Sleep and slumber do not overcome Him, and He knows every delicate thing. He is the Creator of every thing. There is no god besides Him. The whole creation and

all affairs are under His reign. And whoever believes that Allah has a likeness is a polytheist.

"Whoever ascribes to the Imamate Shī'ah other than what has been said is a liar. And any hadīth which contains issues other than what has been recounted has to be rejected as a forged and false tradition. And any hadīth which is contrary to the Holy Qur'an is a false tradition, even if it is found in Shī'ah books."(1)

It can be deduced from Shaykh Mufīd's statement and the assertions of other people that Allah has no likeness and has all the attributes of perfection [sifāt-i kamāl].

Nothing more than this can be said with respect to Allah.

Some philosophers have said that the existence of possible or contingent beings with respect to the existence of Allah belongs to the category of analogical gradation; that is to say, our existence is a weaker level and the existence of Allah is a higher [or stronger] level. For instance, the light of a candle and the light of the sun are both lights, but they have different levels. Existence, just like light, has levels.

In my opinion, it is better for us to refrain from such kinds of discourses with respect to the Essence of Allah and make no judgments. At least, we have to be cautious [when we make assertions concerning the Divine Essence of Allah]. What has been explained are reflections about Allah's effects; one can reflect as much as he can regarding the effects of Allah, but

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۱- Shaykh Mufīd, I'tiqādāt, p. ۲۱.

it is prohibited to meditate about His Divine Essence.

The goal of creation is monotheism and refutation of polytheism

Concerning the goal of creation, Allah states:

"I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they should worship Me."(1)

Devotional service to Allah means submission to His Divine will and acknowledging His oneness in all aspects, whether in beliefs or acts of worship, and forsaking every kind .of polytheism and idolatry

It has been recounted in some hadīths that the above quoted verse means that the goal of creation is acquisition of knowledge and knowing the One God. It is to be concluded that the jinn and humans have been created to attain monotheism, to .know Allah, the One, and to submit to Him

Monotheism conforms to man's primordial nature

Contrary to polytheism, which is an inclination to defection and opposed to man's primordial nature, monotheism is precisely in conformity with man's innate disposition. The reason why monotheism is man's innate disposition has already been explained under the discussion about the monotheism of idolaters when confronted by crises. Qur'anic verses denote that idolaters used to invoke Allah when the sea became stormy and they were afraid of drowning, and that they used to forsake their .idols during those moments

:Here, it is proper for us to quote this verse

So set your face on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah" according to which He originated mankind (there is no altering Allah's creation; that is (the upright religion, but most people do not know)."(۲)

The origination of Allah' [in the above quoted verse] denotes monotheism. It means'

.Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt ۵۱:۵۶ -۱

.Sūrat al-Rūm ۳۰:۳۰ -۲

that Allah created man's soul with a natural inclination to worship Allah. It has been recounted in a hadīth transmitted from the Noble Prophet (s) that every person was born with an innate disposition to monotheism and the worship of Allah, but it is their

(parents who deviate them to Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism.(١

The goal of prophets (‘a) is monotheism

Prophets (‘a) were delegated to exterminate polytheism and revive monotheism. Prophets (‘a) came to deliver man from idolatry and make him a monotheist. There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an which indicate this, some of which we will quote :hereunder

Then, after them We brought forth another generation, and We sent them an“ apostle from among themselves, saying, ‘Worship Allah! You have no other god besides Him. Will they not then be wary [of Him]?’ Said the elite of his people, who were faithless and who denied the encounter of the Hereafter and whom We had given affluence in the life of the world: ‘This is just a human being like you: he eats what you eat, and drinks what you drink. If you obey a human being like yourselves, (you will indeed be losers’.”(٢

They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah is intent on“ (perfecting His light though the faithless should be averse.”(٣

We did not send any apostle before you but We revealed to him that ‘There is no god“ (except Me; so worship Me’.”(۴

It can be inferred from the above quoted verses that the aim of delegating prophets (('a

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١- Tafsīr ‘Illīyyīn, p. ۴٠٧, as quoted from “Majma‘ al-Bayān.”

٢- Sūrat al-Mu’minūn ٢٣:٣١-٣۴.

٣- Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā’ah) ٩:٣٢.

۴- Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ ٢١:٢۵.

is to preach monotheism to mankind and put an end to any kind of polytheism and .idolatry

In the entire course of history, prophets ('a) fought against polytheism and polytheists. The Noble Prophet (s) too was charged with fighting idolatry and going to war against polytheists.

"Fight them until faithlessness(۱) is no more, and religion becomes [exclusively] for Allah. Then, if they relinquish, there shall be no reprisal except against the wrongdoers."(۲)

'Al-fitnah' basically means a trial, and it is employed in one of the following three instances: ۱) tribulation, ۲) retribution, and ۳) obstructing the way of Allah and religion.

In the above quoted verse, it means polytheism.

The above quoted verse means that continue fighting until monotheism is established and accepted [by all]. There should be no war after monotheism has been established and accepted.

It has thus been written in "Tafsīr al-Mīzān", "This verse exclusively pertains to polytheists, and does not include the People of the Book (i.e. Jews and Christians). Religion [al-dīn] denotes establishing monotheism and refuting polytheism, and this is accepted by the People of the Book, even if their beliefs are in reality [a kind of] polytheism. Islam is content with their paying the jizyah(۳) and there is no need to go to war with them so that they may pronounce the phrase 'There is no god except Allah' [lā ilāha illā allāh]."

In "Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr", it has been said that 'fitnah' means polytheism and religion [al-dīn] means the pronouncement 'There is no god except Allah'. And the Noble Prophet

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۱- Or 'polytheism'.

۲- Sūrat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۹۳.

۳- Head tax imposed on all non-Muslims living under the protection of an Islamic

.government

s) stated, “Allah has ordered me to fight until monotheism is established, after which) (war is unnecessary.”(١)

In “Majma‘ al-Bayān”, a tradition has been transmitted from Imām al-Sādiq (‘a) that he said, “‘Fitnah’ means polytheism and ‘al-dīn’ denotes obeying Allah and submitting ”.to His orders

It can be deduced from the purport of the above quoted verse as well as the .traditions that polytheism is by no means acceptable to Allah

[Chapter ١١: The Etymological and Juristic Meaning of Worship [‘ibādah

point

The term worship [‘ibādah] and its various derivatives have been employed in a lot of .Qur’anic verses. It is for this reason that its meaning has to be well clarified

Some people imagine that worship means a particular deed and action, like performing the ritual prayers or paying the zakāt(٢) or prostrating, but that is not the .case. The term worship has to be studied in more detail

[The etymological meaning of worship [‘ibādah

We will initially quote the etymological meaning of worship [‘ibādah] from wordbooks .and thereafter quote Qur’anic verses to clarify its denotation

Hereunder, we have cited quotations from the Book “Al-Tahqīq fī Kalamāt al-Qur’ān”, written by Hasan Mustafawī, in which he recounts the opinions of a number of .etymologists

It has thus been written in “Misbāh al-Lughah” of Qayyūmī, “Worship [‘ibādatallāh] denotes submitting and yielding to Allah. Its subjective noun is worshipper [‘ābid], ”.(whose plurals are ‘ibād and ‘abad (worshippers

It has thus been written in “Maqā’īs al-Lughah”, “The word “‘abd’ (servant or adorer)

denotes one who is submissive and obedient. A docile and obedient camel is called 'mu'abbad' and an even road is also called 'tarīq

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.Tafsīr Al-Mīzān, vol. ۲, p. ۶۲, ۷۲ -۱

Alms tax or tax on the accumulated property paid by a Muslim as a part of his - ۲ .religious obligations

mu'abbad' (even path) because such a path has become even as a result of being ".traversed a lot and it has thus become submissive to travelers

The term worship ['ibādah] in the Holy Qur'an

point

What can be gathered from the aforementioned wordbooks is that worship denotes obedience, submission and docility, and the types of worship such as prostration, the ritual prayers and other than these are instances of submission, and that this denotation is compatible with the concept of prayer which we will deduce from .Qur'anic verses

Some people have interpreted worship ['ibādah] as ultimate humility and the utmost .level of submission, which is the same as prostration

:First verse

Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, 'Do not worship Satan. He is indeed" (your manifest enemy. Worship Me. That is a straight path'?"(۱

In the book of exegesis "Kishāf", this verse has thus been explained, "Worshipping Satan means obeying and listening to his orders in affairs which tempt or seduce ".man

It can be inferred from this verse that worship means mere obedience, not utmost obedience. This verse also manifests this same meaning as: "O children of Adam! We

".exhorted you not to submit to Satan, but obey and yield to Me

:Second verse

When the apostles came to them, before them and in their own time,(۲) saying," 'Worship no one except Allah', they said, 'Had our Lord wished, He would certainly have sent down angels [to us]. We indeed disbelieve in what you have been sent (with'."(۳

Certainly, prophets ('a) were not only charged with telling people to prostrate before Allah, but they used

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.Sūrat Yā Sīn ۳۶:۶۰-۶۱ -۱
That is, during the times of their forefathers and in their own time. Or 'from their -۲ .front and behind', that is, from all sides
.Sūrat Fussilat ۴۱:۱۴ -۳

to invite them to a religion based on various laws, such as prayers, fasting, alms tax and the jihād. Of course, prostration [before Allah] is also one of the dictates [of religion]. In short, prophets ('a) were charged with inviting people to the kernel of worship with respect to Allah in all affairs, not just ultimate humility. The following :verse also denotes this

And mention [Hūd] the brother of 'Ād, when he warned his people at Ahqāf—and" warners have passed away before and after him—saying, 'Do not worship anyone (but Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous day'."(۱

:Third verse

Say, 'O people! If you are in doubt about my religion, then [know that] I do not" worship those whom you worship besides Allah. Rather, I worship only Allah, who causes you to die, and I have been commanded to be among the faithful and that (dedicate yourself to the religion, as a hanīf, and never be one of the polytheists'."(۲

It has thus been written in “Mufradāt Rāghib”, “The term religion [dīn] has two meanings; one is obedience, and the other is reward, but it has been borrowed to mean the whole set of Divine law. It is for this reason that obedience and submission .is current in all Divine injunctions

:Fourth verse

Look! [Only] exclusive faith is worthy of Allah, and those who take guardians besides“ him [claiming,] ‘We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah.’ Allah will indeed judge between them concerning that about which they

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۱- ۴۶:۲۱ Sūrat al-Ahqāf.

۲- ۱۰:۱۰۴-۱۰۵ Sūrat Yūnus.

(differ. Indeed, Allah does not guide someone who is a liar and an ingrate.”(۱

:Fifth verse

(And worship your Lord until certainty(۲) comes to you.”(۳“

It has been asserted that ‘certainty’ in the above quoted verse means death; that is to say, worship Allah until the end of your life. Of course, it does not mean that be in a state of prostration until the end of your lives, but that be in a state of submission until .the end of your lives

For this reason, worship [‘ibādah] denotes submission and humility with respect to .Allah and no other condition is involved

[Concordance between the meaning of supplication [du‘ā] and worship [‘ibādah

point

In Qur’anic verses, the words worship and supplicate (or invocation) have been used synonymously. We assert that these two words have one and the same meaning. Worship [‘ibādah], as has been clarified, means submission, docility and obedience.

Supplication or invocation [du‘ā] also means the same, and there are Qur’anic verses :which prove this

:First verse

And they invoke none but females besides Him, and invoke none but a froward“ (Satan.”(۴

Majma‘ al-Bayān” asserts that ‘they invoke’ means ‘they worship’, that is to say, they“ worship none but idols and Satan. It ought not to be left unsaid that worshipping idols is the same as worshipping Satan because worshipping idols was done upon orders from Satan. It is clear that worshipping Satan means obeying him, and listening to his .orders

It has thus been written in “Tafsīr al-Mīzān”, “The first ‘they invoke’ [in the above quoted verse] means worship and the second one denotes obedience, because polytheists used to ask

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۱- ۳۹:۳ Sūrat al-Zumar.

۲- Or ‘death’.

۳- ۱۵:۹۹ Sūrat al-Hijr.

۴- ۴:۱۱۷ Sūrat al-Nisā’.

(idols to alleviate their needs.”(۱

The assertion of “Tafsīr al-Mīzān” that there is a difference between the two is, in my opinion, not correct, but that of “Majma‘ al-Bayān” that they both mean worship is .correct, because worship means the same as obedience

:Second verse

Say, ‘O people! If you are in doubt about my religion, then [know that] I do not“ worship those whom you worship besides Allah. Rather, I worship only Allah, who causes you to die, and I have been commanded to be among the faithful, and that

dedicate yourself to the religion, as a hanīf, and never be one of the polytheists. Nor invoke besides Allah that which neither benefits you nor can do you any harm; for if (you do so, then you will indeed be among the wrongdoers’.”(۲

It becomes clear from the above quoted verse that the words ‘worship’ and ‘invoke’ are used synonymously; for instance, ‘you worship besides Allah’ and ‘invoke besides .’Allah

:Third verse

Your Lord has said, ‘Call Me, and I will hear you!’ Indeed, those who are disdainful of“ (My worship will enter Hell in utter humility.”(۳

:Fourth verse

Say, ‘I have been forbidden to worship those whom you invoke besides Allah, since“ there have come to me manifest proofs from my Lord, and I have been commanded (to submit to the Lord of all the worlds’.”(۴

Sincere worship

Worship which is acceptable to Allah is that which is purely for Him and is not contaminated by any kind of polytheism. Polytheists also used to worship Allah, but also used to worship idols

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.Tafsīr al-Mīzān, exegesis of the above quoted verse -۱

.Sūrat Yūnus ۱۰:۱۰۴-۱۰۶ -۲

.Sūrat al-Ghāfir (or al-Mu’min) ۴۰:۶۰ -۳

.Sūrat al-Ghāfir (or al-Mu’min) ۴۰:۶۶ -۴

.besides Him, and it is for this very reason that their worship was not accepted

:Consider the following verses, which denote that worship ought to be purely for Allah

Set your heart [on Him] at every occasion of prayer, and invoke Him, putting your“ (exclusive faith in Him.”(1

(You [alone] do we worship.”(2“

[The meaning of prostration [sajdah

In order to understand the meaning of prostration [sajdah], it is better to first refer to .Qur’anic verses

Have you not regarded that whatever thing Allah has created casts its shadow to the“ right and to the left, prostrating to Allah in utter humility? To Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, including animals and angels, (and they are not arrogant.”(3

It is clear that in the above quoted verse, prostration does not mean placing one’s forehead on the ground. In “Kishāf”, it has been said that prostration means .submission of all existents to Allah

Evidently, this is the correct meaning of prostration, and placing one’s forehead on .the ground is only one instance of prostration

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۱- Sūrat al-A‘rāf ۷:۲۹.

۲- Sūrat al-Fātihah ۱:۵.

۳- Sūrat al-Nahl ۱۶:۴۸-۴۹.

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It’s obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism-places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,-web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and-English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named “Ghaemiyeh Book Market” with Android, IOS,-WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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